
THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA: ANALYSIS OF X/TWITTER

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Abstract: The development of information technologies and their global diffusion have caused radical changes in every sphere of life. The favoring of digital technologies was enhanced by the Internet, which evolved at an unprecedented speed. This trend was also reflected in the field of cultural heritage. In doing so, many programs have been designed and implemented that include the use of digital technology in promoting larger access to cultural heritage. One of the inevitable segments associated with the use of the Internet is social media. Social networks provide numerous opportunities, some of which are the exchange of opinions, socializing, gathering information and experiences on all topics. Even though the use of social media to spread knowledge about cultural heritage, as well as to effectively engage in dialogues for the preservation of cultural heritage has not been fully explored, still enabling communication between a large number of users, brings great potential for the promotion of cultural heritage.

This paper analyzes the representation of cultural heritage institutions in Macedonia on the X/X/Twitter social network. At the same time, in order to give a clear overview of the degree of their representation, their activities, the period of their access and last activity on X/X/Twitter, as well as the response of other users to their posts are analyzed. The performed analysis indicates that only a small number of cultural heritage institutions joined X/X/Twitter, while they were active only for a short period. Even though it may be necessary to revise their approach strategy on X/X/Twitter, such a situation indicates that the potential of cooperation with users, which would help in raising awareness of cultural heritage and its protection for generations to come, is not recognized between these institutions.

Keywords: cultural heritage, cultural heritage institutions, social media, X/X/Twitter

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology today increasingly affects all aspects of society and brings numerous changes in the way of communication, which is also visible in the increased use of social networks. Digital technology and digital tools bring changes in all areas of human life. Nowadays, numerous activities are increasingly being held virtually, including meetings, shopping, downloading various documents, and even lectures and other school and academic activities. In such an environment, the Internet as a medium offers numerous possibilities, some of which are social networks where people meet for the purpose of socializing, exchanging opinions, information and experiences on all topics. Among the wide range of topics, cultural heritage has also found its place in the virtual environment. Moreover, participation in this form of communication can have a strong impact on changing the perception of the value of cultural heritage and influence its dissemination.

The concept of cultural heritage is very dynamic and people's understanding of what it represents and includes is constantly changing and evolving over time. The term cultural heritage itself is a recent construct, and its meaning is constantly expanding to more and more areas of human activity. In the Hague Convention from 1954 (UNESCO, 2020), the term cultural heritage is mentioned in several places, but it was not until 1972, at the UNESCO (1972) Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, that the term cultural heritage came into wide use. Additionally, over the years it has been pointed out that cultural heritage does not only include monuments and collections of objects. Moreover, it was stated that it also includes: "traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts" (UNESCO, 2023). Based on this, at the General Assembly in 2003, UNESCO (2022) adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in which the importance of intangible heritage as a driver of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development is emphasized.

Borowiecki, Forbes & Fresa (2016) offer a broad definition according to which cultural heritage: "encompasses the extraordinarily rich and valuable tangible objects and materials in the collections of cultural institutions; the heritage represented in landscapes and in the built environment; and also intangible, living heritage such as customs and traditions". At the same time, they point out that cultural heritage has a huge potential for improving people's quality of life, through a better understanding of the past, territorial cohesion is encouraged, and it has a positive impact on

economic growth. Interest in cultural heritage opens up opportunities for employment and support for wider development, especially in the fields of education and art. Bearing in mind this spectrum of possible benefits for society, the need for an analysis of the utilization of the possibilities offered by social media for promoting cultural heritage in Macedonian society is quite clear.

2. DIGITALIZATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In a world characterized by constant and often unpredictable changes, but also by great opportunities for development, one element is inevitable: the digital factor. Digital technologies and applications have a growing influence on the form and content of changes in contemporary society. Also, they create opportunities for new, distributed ways of working and communicating, as well as exploring new products and services in the field of cultural heritage. Digitization has the purpose of ensuring and improving access to materials, which thus become quickly and easily accessible to all interested parties. The application of digital technologies to different forms of cultural heritage shows enormous benefits in terms of effectiveness, cost reduction, visibility and social, cultural and educational inclusion (Borowiecki, Forbes & Fresa, 2016). Digitization of cultural heritage gained momentum at the beginning of the 21st century, when basic documents and guidelines for digitalization of heritage were drawn up, such as the Lund Principles from 2001, which were signed by the member states of the European Union. Their goal is better coordination of cultural heritage digitization projects, digitalization of cultural and other contents and their global promotion (e-Europe, 2001). In addition to the Lund Principles, numerous manifestos were also adopted, such as IFLA's Digital Library Manifesto (UNESCO, 2011), IFLA's (2002) Guidelines for digitization projects, and UNESCO's (2003) Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage. As a reflection of new digitization trends, the European Commission (2023) in 2008 launched the Europeana platform, which is the largest digital collection of European cultural heritage, containing collections from numerous sources of libraries, museums, archives and galleries, and as such represents an invaluable source of digitized European cultural heritage. It provides access to more than 58 million digitised cultural heritage records from over 3600 cultural heritage institutions and organisations, accompanied by photographs and descriptions, as well as extensive metadata, copyright information and a link to the original site that allowed the material to be shared.

Regarding the benefits of digitization of cultural heritage content, Russo and Watkins (2007) highlight the benefits for cultural institutions. In doing so, they indicate that: "by drawing communities in the consumption and creation of digital content, cultural institutions can take a proactive role in developing new literacies by enabling direct experience of content production and creating environments for community engagement". According to them, cultural institutions are civil, social and political spaces, but they are also experience spaces. Through the specific way of presenting the context and content, they allow the audience to create meaning from individual experiences. In doing so, cultural institutions include systems of institutionalized knowledge, as they connect that knowledge into a whole. In this process, the Internet offers the audience the opportunity to experience first-hand the various contents of the cultural heritage and to communicate with narratives, creating unique experiences. In doing so, cultural institutions act as a constantly repaired environment, thereby enabling audiences to create meaning and derive their notions of reality from access to the repaired network. This kind of interaction has transformed the ways in which audiences have accessed and navigated cultural information in the past (Russo & Watkins, 2007).

3. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Social networking is one of the most popular activities carried out on the Internet. More precisely, in 2022, the number of social media users worldwide was over 4.59 billion, while the projections for 2027 are that this number will grow to almost 6 billion (Statista, 2023). The attractiveness of social media stems from the ability for users to interact, discuss topics, post, and build relationships with users around the world. In addition, being accessible via smartphones, social media offers the ability to quickly share data and get the latest updates on an event. With the advent of social media as a part of our everyday life, its representation among cultural heritage institutions was inevitable. The attractiveness of social media for cultural institutions stems from the numerous possibilities that social media offer for the promotion of cultural heritage. In doing so, social media enable preservation, dissemination, protection and participatory culture (including social tagging and social memory, for example) (Gaitan, 2014). They use their accounts to engage in distinctive social media communities, sharing daily posts about excavations, exhibition installations or information on new and ongoing heritage projects. In this way, they try to reach a wider audience, and at the same time raise awareness of the importance of cultural heritage. The possibility of interaction, characteristic of social media, brings cultural institutions closer to the general public, thus enabling a better understanding of cultural heritage, which has a key impact on raising awareness of its diversity and significance. In addition, Borowiecki, Forbes and Fresa (2016) point out that: "the emergence of new media

technologies and associated social networks has driven a massive transfer of expressive power towards young people". Therefore, today, many scholars and cultural institutions have started to explore the potential of using digital technologies and social media in the context of participatory planning and public input for heritage websites, archives, online exhibitions and museums (Ginzarly & Teller, 2020). According to Tomas Kvan (2008), social media offers an opportunity to overcome the passive interaction of the public with the cultural heritage. He indicates that social media offer opportunities for developing new forms of expression and understanding of cultural heritage, as well as for cooperation on issues related to it. To achieve this, social media enable the use of a range of digital tools and interaction techniques for the interpretation and reconstruction of cultural heritage.

Pointing to social media as one of the most important facilitators to promote double side collaboration between authorities and citizens, Liang, Lu and Martin (2021) in their study provide a comprehensive global overview of the availability and functionalities of social media. In doing so, they identify the tools and platforms that are applied to the current process of cultural heritage management. According to their findings, social media tools are generally applied to museums rather than urban heritage buildings and landscapes. In the cases in which they analyze applied social media tools, interactive methods for heritage objects, and the impact on sustainable cultural heritage management, Facebook is the most popular social media, followed immediately by X/Twitter, while customized websites are third. Hence, they indicate that text-based platforms are most popular among global audiences.

4. MACEDONIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS ON X/Twitter

X/Twitter is an online social networking and micro blogging service that was launched in 2006, on which 556 million monthly active users were recorded in January 2023 (Statista, 2023). Inherent to X/Twitter communication are statements called "tweets", which can contain up to 140 characters. While, X/Twitter is recognized as a social media where real-time information is exchanged and a place for debate in news, politics, business and entertainment (Weller et al., 2014). Additionally, Stephen Dann (2015) points out that X/Twitter's advantage over Facebook stems from the default public nature of X/Twitter, as opposed to the default private nature of Facebook. This perception arises from the fact that X/Twitter accounts post content to the public timeline by default and can be viewed from a public website which creates a source of secondary published data. Also, among numerous social media platforms, X/Twitter has been recognized by the academic and journalistic community as the most influential platform in shaping public opinion. Despite the smaller number of users than Facebook, X/Twitter audience in Macedonia has a constant activity and is a kind of avant-garde in commenting on all important social and political developments. Their comments and criticisms reach all other social networks very quickly and are often posted as news or attached to news by online media. Bearing in mind that the interaction made possible by social media offers new potential for the transmission of cultural heritage experiences to the audience (Kvan, 2008), this insight into the representation of Macedonian cultural institutions on X/Twitter was made.

The analysis used the advanced search function of X/Twitter. In doing so, only tweets in the Macedonian language were extracted. In the research, the advanced search function of X/Twitter was used to filter (a set of predefined search terms) all tweets that contained the words: "музеј", "културно наследство", "споменици" and "историско наследство". After performing the search according to the mentioned keywords, the identified tweets, that is, their content was copied and imported into Excel tables. At the same time, it was established that only two cultural heritage institutions: Archaeological Museum of R. North Macedonia and Museum of the City of Skopje, have accounts on X/Twitter. In addition, a non-governmental organization, ICOMOS Macedonia, which is member of a large non-governmental international organization in the field of protection and conservation of cultural heritage, has its own account. After the performed analysis, the following findings were determined:

- Archaeological Museum of R.North Macedonia joined X/Twitter in June 2018, while the last activity, that is the last posted content, was on December 25, 2021. During this period, the Archaeological Museum had 253 posts and gained 331 followers. The posts include content from the Macedonian cultural archaeological heritage, exhibitions of collections of artifacts, monuments preserved as cultural heritage, ongoing archaeological research, educational videos with audio narration and sign language, virtual visits to exhibitions, events for the promotion of the Macedonian cultural archaeological heritage, exhibitions of content from archaeological research, announcement of publications, exhibitions of content from museums from other countries and visits by guests from other countries. However, these posts have a very low number of replays, retweets and likes, which indicates low visibility and recognition among the X/Twitter community in Macedonia.

- The Museum of the City of Skopje joined X/Twitter in February 2020, and in the same month, its activity on X/Twitter ends, that is, the last post is on February 19, 2020. At the same time, they have 24 posts and have gained 162 followers. Within the posts, there are contents from promotions of publications with contents of important museum objects and works of art, an exhibition of the most important exhibits from the Museum's

collections, commemoration of the Museum's anniversary, an exhibition of top works of art in the field of painting, important museum objects and works of art from the museum's collections, exhibitions of archaeological finds, and pictures of archaeological situations discovered by research at locations in the vicinity of Skopje. As with the Archaeological Museum posts, these posts have very few comments, retweets and likes, that is, low visibility among the X/Twitter community in Macedonia.

- ICOMOS Macedonia (National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites - ICOMOS in Macedonia) joined X/Twitter in April 2020, and it is still active on X/Twitter. Moreover, their first post is on October 8, 2021, after which compared to the previously mentioned institutions, they have a significantly higher activity, that is, since the period of joining X/Twitter, they have 1032 posts, while they have gained 134 followers. In addition, their posts, apart from Macedonian, are written in English as well. Within their posts are listed contents from the Orthodox cultural heritage on the territory of Macedonia, publications of guides and monographs in the field of cultural heritage, webinars in the field of cultural heritage, significant cultural-historical objects in Macedonia, objects and localities that are part of the world heritage, guide applications of archaeological sites, announcements about summer schools for conservation and protection of cultural heritage, current researches of various sites in Macedonia and abroad, areas in Macedonia with numerous cultural and historical landmarks, announcements for events organized by UNESCO, projects from the field of cultural heritage, links to virtual tours of archaeological sites in Macedonia, and international and domestic acts for the protection of cultural heritage. Also, in addition to most of the publications, a download link is indicated, while in addition to the posts about events and projects, there are links to the event or project, that is, the institution that organizes the activity or event. But also in the case of ICOMOS, the posts have very few comments, retweets and likes.

To this overview of the representation and visibility of Macedonian cultural heritage institutions on X/Twitter, I would like to mention Gaitan's (2014) remarks, who points out that: "...each social media is different and therefore it is necessary for cultural institutions to understand their differences in order to use them appropriately. Not every idea is valid on social media, and not every idea works. Assuming that the simple fact of having an account on a social network will make our collection, our heritage or our institution more visible, and will magically activate an intense dialogue with the public is naïve." In doing so, she indicates certain guidelines for better planning and organizing the activities of cultural institutions on social media: "A cultural institution needs to set a social media plan with achievable objectives, a clear message, a well-defined audience and evaluation methods and indicators to analyze whether the implemented strategy was successful or not." (Gaitan, 2014).

5. CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage is one of the most important drivers of personal development and social cohesion for a country. The use of digital tools in promoting cultural heritage and raising awareness of the need for its protection is receiving increasing attention. Despite the awareness of this fact, the cultural heritage is still insufficiently presented to the citizens of Macedonia, so cultural activities are not incorporated into the lifestyle of the citizens. Technology offers enormous potential for increasing awareness of the need to familiarize with cultural heritage, with the offers of cultural institutions, as well as the possibility of establishing public engagement with culture. The current digital solutions adopted by cultural heritage institutions, especially their representation on social networks, are insufficiently successful in raising citizens' interest in cultural heritage content. The analysis of X/Twitter, as a unique example of an open social network, indicates that there is no interest among the cultural heritage institutions in promoting their activities or deepening the interaction with the users, that is Macedonian citizens. It is assumed that the low response to the activities of these institutions would require a revision of their strategy for X/Twitter, that is, the setting up a concrete social media plan. However, the short period of activity and the small number of cultural heritage institutions on X/Twitter points to the conclusion that among this type of institutions in Macedonia, there is not enough interest in using the potential of this social networking service as an instrument for preserving and promoting the cultural heritage.

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