MANN's Digital Strategy

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Abstract

Focus of this paper are the digital strategies of National Archaelogical Museum of Naples (MANN- Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli). The contribution also testifies links and joint initiatives with other public institutions, such as schools and universities, but also with private companies in gaming and entertainment. In general it emerges a strategy that may result in a new cultural horizon of true autonomy, helping "to regenerate" the city from a cultural, economic and social point of view.

Keywords

Digital strategies, digital cultural heritage, museums, gaming.

During the first phase of the pandemic (March-June 2020), MANN was rated by Politecnico di Milano as "the most active museum on Facebook". This was definitely a change of pace, one of the many signs of a new relationship between our cultural heritage and the digitization programs, so it cannot be considered a sporadic episode.

Nothing ever happens by chance. The wealth of content that was disseminated during the lockdown is the result of four years of ceaseless work in compliance with the commitments of the Museum strategic plan 2016-2019, created by Ludovico Solima of the Vanvitelli University and our museum staff, which identifies the key targets of accessibility, connection, listening to the physical and digital community.

According to the principles of our Statute, the social value of the museum is equal to the cultural one. While investigating the ancient world, we aim to grasp the analogies with contemporary reality, thus contributing to the mould of the opinions and the critical abilities of our visitors, as it should be done at school.

Furthermore, the museum collections have been reinterpreted by all the artistic languages, in collaboration with University Federico II, through the OBVIA project. Literature, cartoons, comics, cinema and many other artistic means of expression described the museum and spread its image, mainly in a digital mode, on social networks, along with Naples main infrastructure, such as the subway and the airport or, at a national level, on the Frecciarossa high-speed trains. In 50 video clips, our archaeologists have told the story of several museum masterpieces, becoming the undisputed protagonists in the city of a new way of narrating the tales of our treasures, constantly appearing in the videos of the subway lines.

MANN went a step further: in association with Tuo Museo, it created the videogame "Father and Son", which was released in 10 languages, including Neapolitan, and was downloaded by over 5 million users around the world. Thanks to "The Accessible Museum", a programme financed through PON funds, further experiments saw the light: five short films made by Lucio Fiorentino were dedicated to the emotions of the public visiting the museum; some candid cameras, "A Wolf at the Museum", were based on themes with a strong social impact, such as racism; some detective stories taking place at the museum were published in the series "I Gialli Mondadori", and were later converted into podcasts; not to mention the project called "The Digital Siren".

The advertising campaigns made by "The Jackal", a very popular comedy group, has had great success among young people; on the other hand, important lectures were delivered by scholars of the likes of Luciano Canfora during the Fuoriclassico Festival, approaching cross-cutting themes between past and present, and were re-proposed on MANN's Youtube and Facebook channels. Furthermore, in September 2020, MANN produced "Agalma", its first film documenting the

behind the scenes of museum life, awarded in the documentary category at Venice Film Festival. MANN has thus created an extraordinary "fire capacity", only partially reached before, and spread it during the lockdown. It will also be displayed on the new website and the Ministry of Culture platform, "It's Art", to be launched on May 31, 2021.

During the lockdown, a tight connection has been established with a group of young people who, as a rule, would only visit the museum under "physical constraint", (i.e. during school trips), and with students of university age. The message to be conveyed is that MANN is not only a place for education and learning but an area where you can meet, discuss and spend your free time in good company. This message is coherent to the ICOM principles, and the declaration that culture is enhanced through delight. However, our Institutes must lay the ground for adequate communication systems and services, starting from wi-fi or the many technological methods created to enhance the exhibition virtual experience (video mapping, augmented reality, specific apps), as it happened to many of our exhibits like "Star Wars", "The Assyrians" or "The Gladiators".

The first five years of autonomy have been an extraordinary experience that certainly cannot be arrested by Covid, despite witnessing a sudden slowdown of the tourist-cultural system. The virus has certainly brought States to their knees, and museums have been affected too. The number of people visiting MANN, for example, has reduced from 700,000 to 100,000 with consequent economic losses. Anyway, the ability to cope with the crisis has already been triggered by the arrival of two PON funds for digital projects from the Ministry of Culture. MANN has immediately set to work, thanks to its strong relationship with University, to create new digital languages following distinctive principles.

According to one of those principles, new technologies will help the spread of museum non-specular contents, different points of view and reflection opportunities. The second principle focuses on the importance of school, very much neglected in this period. Platforms for online teaching have been created to connect teachers and pupils, allowing them to move around inside a virtual museum. It is now possible to interact with children, but also to log onto additional contents, such as videos, augmented reality, databases and so on. The third principle states that technology is a necessary tool (as it has always been from ancient times) but not a purpose in itself: for this reason, at the basis of every project, rigorous contents are needed (rigour is not equivalent to complexity) together with a specific goal. Finally, as stated in the new 2020-2023 strategic plan, new technologies must be accessible, cross-media, if possible transparent.

We mention only a few of them. Digital exhibitions are being planned (the first one is dedicated to food in the ancient Mediterranean area) and they are expected to work alongside or replace the many exhibitions that have attracted over 3 million visitors in 2019, in China and Russia alone.

Within the framework of gamification, we will release the second chapter of the videogame "Father and Son", a gaming adventure on Minecraft and another video game called "Escape from Museum".

In addition to the main educational platforms, which we mentioned above, there will be a smartphone app conveying many additional contents: for example, the colours of ancient statues, as resulted from the project "MANN in Colors".

MANN is also starting a project with the use of augmented reality on its "Model of Pompeii", as well as with the enhancement of additional digital contents to all the galleries gradually reopening (the Egyptian, Epigraphic, Magna Grecia, Prehistory, Cuma, Neapolis, Roman Sculpture in Campania collections).

Furthermore, thanks to the support of the Campania Region and some American Universities, a huge database is being prepared. It will be available online and will provide standard information and 3D rendering of every piece of art: it's a project involving the legendary SING SING storeroom, which preserves hundreds of thousands of extraordinary objects from Pompeii and Herculaneum. This project is meant to be OPEN access, a guarantee for future developments in global scientific progress.

Among the main futuristic projects, we will watch live through google glasses the restoration work on the famous Alexander mosaic, thanks to the financial support given by TIM and NTT DATA. Digital restoration is the resource that will be used to put together and restore the pieces of the famous quadriga (four-horse chariot) of Herculaneum.

Further innovative fields consist of the

digitization of the Farnese Bull, to reconstruct its digital copy, the 3D scans of selected artefacts that will become MANN's quality merchandising (like the chessboard with the pieces made with its statues), the kit depicting the nativity scene inspired by some of the MANN masterpieces, replicas of MANN's famous scenes through action figures, such as the battle of Issus.

Work is still underway to have Alexander the Great himself greet the public upon arrival, narrate his deeds inside an immersive multimedia room and introduce our Institute, which nowadays is a beating heart of the city, and its projects.

There will come a time, hopefully soon, when people from all over the world will return to visit our museums. We need to be prepared for them, who no longer are the heirs of the travellers of the Grand Tour.

Our communities are made up of different ethnicities. To be able to speak to everyone, the Museum should put on display, for example, the world map and place the main events of the Roman Empire in constant relation with those of the Chinese one; explain certain technicalities without trivializing them; give voice to the vanquished, to all those civilizations that have always been considered as inferior by the victorious (humble classes, women, barbarians). And by doing so, the needs and the dramas of ancient men will perfectly overlay those of contemporary men. We will no longer find ourselves in front of the stereotypical creation of admirable works of art belonging to a past golden age that actually never existed. Many of these issues can only be conveyed through technology.

The task of the museum of tomorrow cannot be fulfilled by adapting it to the newcomers only. In particular, the new museum is expected to play an ethical role and be active in the construction of an educational, cultural and economic strategy within the city, helping all those splendid young people who are proposing new management formulas of important monuments that are closed to the public or poorly valued. This strategy may result in a new cultural horizon of true autonomy and may help "to regenerate" the city from a cultural, economical and social point of view, welcoming new museum professions alongside the classic ones (sociologists, anthropologists, communication experts, computer scientists and many others). For this reason, MANN is creating a digital platform inside the Cultural District where, as a main cultural attractor, it plays the role of a supervisor by monitoring all the other cultural subjects (for example, the members of the network called Extramann and of the nearby friendly stores), supporting them in case of participation in national and European calls, favouring the communication of contents and much more.

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