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Topic of the Year: Small but Kind of Mighty

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Italian Museums and Twitter: an analysis of Museum Week 2016

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Abstract

This paper analyses the activities of Italian cultural institutions and Twitter users during Museum Week 2016, a global event promoting museums on this platform. The paper draws on recent research in the field of museum and heritage studies to assess the characteristics of social media engagement in the Italian heritage sector and the challenges still to be overcome. By drawing on the case study of Museum Week, an initiative which has been celebrated by the media as a success of Italian museums, the paper will unpack digital engagement practices and evaluation methodologies, questioning the reach and breadth of social media engagement achieved during the week by Italian institutions. The paper concludes by highlighting the current potential and limitations of digital engagement practices in Italy.

Keywords

Social media, museums, digital engagement, Twitter analytics, heritage audiences.

Introduction

In 2014, Twitter invited 12 French museums, and subsequently other selected museums in different European countries, to discuss a common event and, as a consequence of these conversations, the first 'Museum Week' was planned for the end of March 2014. This first edition witnessed the participation of more than 630 European museums, which generated around 260,000 tweets (Ryst 2014; Museum Week 2015). In 2015, 2,207 museums, galleries and cultural institutions from over 64 countries participated, generating around 600,000 tweets. In 2016, between the March 28th and the April 3rd, more than 3,000 museums from 70 countries generated around 650,000 tweets.

This paper investigates the reach and impact of Museum Week 2016 in Italy and, by doing so, it highlights challenges and perspectives for digital engagement in Italian museums and archaeology. It will examine the activities of Italian Twitter users during Museum Week 2016 and question the value of such social media campaigns for museum professionals and for different audiences. Ultimately, this paper aims to argue for a better use of analytics in the sector and in doing so it contributes to the debate on the potential of social media for evaluation purposes; their use in cultural institutions; and the need for a more mature and digitally aware use of such data both for internal and external agendas.

Museum Week 2016 witnessed a success of Italian institutions, which was widely reported in the press and celebrated on social media. However, this paper will argue that besides the number of tweets shared by Italian users, other analytics can offer a more in-depth insight into the

contribution of this social media campaign to widening participation, raising and maintaining public interest for Italian heritage.

The following sections will present a brief literature review of recent research on the use of social media for audience engagement in the heritage sector; an overview of the methodology behind this research; an in-depth analysis of tweets from the last day of Museum Week 2016 (#loveMW) and discussion of the findings; and it will then draw some conclusions on the state of social media engagement in Italian heritage. The author acknowledges that this paper is presenting preliminary findings from an ongoing research, which aims to investigate and develop social media analytics for museums and explore the challenges encountered by museum professionals in digitally engaging with their audiences.

Social media in the heritage sector

The heritage sector has been discussing the potential of the Web for cultural institutions since the mid-1990s: for example, in 1995 Anne Fahy was preannouncing that "sophisticated computer-based applications now and in the future may completely change the ways in which museums communicate internally and with external bodies" (Fahy 1995, p. 82). In 1997, the first edition of the successful Museums and the Web conference was held in the US, and since the 2000s there has been a growing body of literature and research in the field of digital heritage. In the museum field, digital media have been seen as a way to dilute the museum authority (Adair, Filene & Koloski 2011) and expand participatory cultures (Simon 2010; Giaccardi 2012). As Sánchez-Laws summarises, "museums use social media to take on new roles, seek new audiences and become sites of debate and discussion, even allowing multiple interpretations of the objects they hold" (Sánchez-Laws 2015, p. 179). The potential and limits of social media in the museum sector are also being debated and examples of different projects from all over the world are regularly presented in established conferences (e.g. Museum Computer Network, since 1967; the already mentioned Museums and the Web,

since 1997; MuseumNext, since 2009). At the same time, public archaeologists had also begun discussing the potential of the internet for public engagement with archaeological projects and both the Çatalhöyük and the Jordan Plantation websites and forums were first experiments highlighting the potential of online sites for multivocality, but also their limitations (McDavid 2004). More recently, McDavid and Brock noted that "social media is vetted by self-selected social networks, which obviously can limit the user's exposure to alternate views. In these contexts, a few loud voices can sometimes have a dampening effect on meaningful 'multivocal' communication" (McDavid & Brock 2015, p. 173). Indeed, the growing field of digital public archaeology has often debated the limits of public participation on social media: issues connected to a digital divide are now well-known (Richardson 2013; Walker 2014), and there is also an increasing awareness of the different economic, social, and education level of social media users, and its effects on interactions with the institutions in the web 2.0. Briefly, as noted by Richardson, "a public audience with access to the Internet will not automatically guarantee that the creation of a digital Public Archaeology project will widen public participation or increase public involvement and discussion" (Richardson 2013). Additionally, in her research on archaeologists' use of Twitter, Richardson argued that many respondents felt that "using official organisational accounts as a method to only 'broadcast' archaeological information, rather than construct dialogue with the wider tweeting public, has restricted the development of meaningful public engagement" (Richardson 2012, p. 19). The analysis presented in this paper emphasises indeed the limitations in creating meaningful conversations with the wider public during the Italian Museum Week 2016, and particularly the influence of what McDavid and Brock called the 'self-vetting' of one's social media circle appears a determining

However, it is undeniable that social media have become an important source of information for many publics, though this information

is not always gathered from institutional accounts. Since 1999 'the internet' has been cited as a source of archaeological knowledge in surveys on the public understanding of the discipline (Pokotylo & Guppy 1999). In a French research by IPSOS (for the INRAP) it was emphasised the huge growth of the web in the late 2000s: a preliminary survey in 2006 reported that 14% of the interviewees used the Internet to engage with cultural institutions and gather information on archaeology; in 2010, the same question was answered positively by 41% of the interviewees, in the face of a decrease both of television (from 75% to 66%) and press (both generalist and specialised, from 56% to 44% - IPSOS 2011). Furthermore, in 2013, Huvila argued that "the use of social media can affect not only popular ideas of archaeology and the contexts of its relevance, but also archaeological knowledge (i.e. what is known and what is desirable to be known), its documentary representations and the essence of archaeological work itself" (Huvila 2013, p. 21). Indeed, the analysis of the diffusion of a viral video, showing an Egyptian statuette apparently moving of its own accord in a museum case, has demonstrated how quickly social media audiences began to construct their own interpretations of the phenomenon (research by Zuanni 2016; Zuanni & Price forthcoming) and thus how alternative interpretations of archaeology emerged and challenged archaeologists and museum professionals themselves (see also Thomas 2014). Again, similar issues have been encountered also in the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) sector. Particularly, the use of social media and social media metrics and data in the museum sector has been discussed in subsequent reports (e.g. Malde et al. 2013; Digital R&D for the Arts 2015) and this topic has been researched in particular by Elena Villaespesa (2016), also drawing on her experience as digital analyst at Tate Modern (Villaespesa 2013) and at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, US). However, there is still not an established framework for analysing social media data, though a few research projects are investigating the potential and different uses of this data and a recent overview of the use of data in cultural organisations highlighted the challenges still encountered by the sector in moving towards a data-driven practice (Arvanitis et al. 2016).

Previous research and literature has therefore emphasised the limitations to public engagement on social media (and Twitter in particular) for cultural institutions, but also the importance of these same media as a source of information about the past, even if this information is not necessarily gathered from professional-led accounts. At the same time, while in recent years there has been a growing attention to heritage organisations' use of social media data and metrics, it has been highlighted how this is a work just beginning and this paper will begin to question the approach to digital engagement in Italian museums and the reach of such initiatives both in museums and among Italian archaeologists.

The Italian situation

In Italy, the growth of public archaeology in the last few years has been sanctioned by the first Italian Congress of Public Archaeology (in 2012; review in Zuanni 2013) and a breadth and widening of initiatives (Bonacchi 2013). Meanwhile, early platforms for discussing archaeology online (e.g. AI Forum) have been succeeded by a wide network of archaeology blogs (examined by Lo Blundo 2013) and an active Twitter community, while the growth of interest in social media is also proved by the diffusion of workshops and training courses for heritage professionals, and by the huge participation in groups on the topic (e.g. the Facebook group Musei e Social Media -#svegliamuseo as of May 2016, has more than 8,700 members, establishing it as one of the biggest Facebook groups discussing digital media in museums).

The 10th report by Civita, #Socialmuseums. Social media e cultura fra post e tweet (2016), presented at the end of March 2016, offers a detailed overview of the current situation. The report highlights how museums' inclusion and widening participation aims rate low in museums' use of social media: social media appeared to be used mostly for sharing information (e.g. event marketing; museum services) with a lack of user-generated content and thus of new creative 'dialogues' between museums and their publics (De Biase & Valentino 2016). In relation to Twitter, it is also important discussing its diffusion and use in Italy. According to Alexa, Twitter is the 8th most used website globally, but in Italy it ranks at the 17th position (for comparison, Facebook ranks at the 3rd place globally, but at the 2nd in Italy, ALEXA 2016). The We are social report for 2016 states that in Italy there are 37 millions active internet users (63% of the population), including 28 million active social media users (47% of the population), of which 24 million access social media via mobile (40% of the population). For comparison, according to the same report, in the UK (whose research has often been cited as an example for digital public archaeology in Italy), 92% of the population are active Internet users and 59% are active social media users. While between January 2015 and January 2016 Italian Internet users have increased (+6%) and so have mobile users (+9%), social media users have remained the same. Facebook is by large the most used social network (33%), followed by two other social media owned by the same company (Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger). Google+, with its 14% share of social media users, also precedes Twitter (12%) and Instagram (also 12%). It is interesting to note the absence of YouTube (which in Alexa is ranked immediately after Facebook; hence it should be questioned the selection of social networks included in this survey) and of Snapchat, which is enjoying a good success among teenagers, but probably as of Spring 2016 – is not yet widespread in Italy. Again, for comparison, in the UK, Facebook (47%), Facebook Messenger (32%) and Whatsapp (24%) are also the most used social networks, but here Twitter is ranked 4th with a 20% (indeed, according to the latest Ofcom report, 26% of the British adult population has a Twitter account) share of users and Snapchat has 12% of users (We Are Social 2016).

In conclusion, in Italy Twitter has been largely used by archaeologists and museum institutions - as it will be proved by the discussion of Museum Week - but its uptake between the population seems more limited. The following analysis will discuss how wide the range of users engaging in conversations around archaeology and museums on this social network is.

Methodology

'Museum Week' has a principal hashtag for the whole week (#museumweek) and a specific hashtag for each day of the week. This research draws on the full archive of tweets, including both the 7 specific hashtags and the overarching one: since this archive includes around 350,000 tweets and retweets, whose analysis is still undergoing, for the purposes of this paper I chose to focus only on tweets from Italian users shared during the last day of the initiative, Sunday 3rd April, using the dedicated hashtag #loveMW, which encouraged museums to promote their greatest attractions. The methodology used in this analysis has been developed in an on-going effort to research the use of analytics in understanding public engagement with heritage and perceptions of the past and museums: its main advantages and challenges will be unpacked below.

Twitter is a platform with a commercial purpose, shaped by the company's intents to gain followers, promote products, and maintain control on its own data. Twitter has two APIs (Application Programming Interface): a REST API and a Streaming API. Twitter search (available from the Twitter website or smartphone apps) is supported by the REST API, which allows finding a sample of relevant tweets published in the last 7 days or the most recent 1,500 tweets. Hence, any Twitter Search will result in an incomplete list of tweets and users, selected according to criteria which are beyond the researcher's control. Thus, this characteristic makes it difficult to collect tweets retrospectively (they could be acquired through Twitter's firehose, but the price for this data is probably beyond most cultural institutions' budget). Instead, the Streaming API allows getting a complete list of tweets (again, within the last 7 days or a max of 1,500 tweets): a search drawing on this API will collect old tweets and it will also collect new tweets regularly until stopped.

This research has therefore collected tweets through a series of Google sheets that were interfacing with the Streaming API: in this way, it has been possible to collect almost all the tweets (with the exception of cases in which the API hourly rate had been exceeded) for the different Museum Week hashtags. The completeness of the results has been verified by a comparison between my datasets and the data showed by Shore.li (the official platform supporting the Museum Week Twitter data visualisations) presenting almost the same numbers of tweets identified for the different hashtags (the datasets differ instead in counting retweets, due to the collection method). Additionally, the TwitteR package in R (a software environment for statistical computing and graphics), has also allowed me to interact with both APIs, so to collect additional data on the tweets and Twitter users (such as all the short bio in the Twitter profiles, that informed the coding of the users).

The original tweet archive included tweets from all over the world: in order to identify Italian users, the Twitter API 'lang' ('language') field has been used. This allows selecting users based on the language their Twitter account is setup in: though this approach highlights users' language setting, rather than their actual nationality and location, it was deemed sufficient for the purposes of this research. It should be acknowledged, though, that some tweets by Italian users - who are using Twitter in a different language - might be missing in this analysis.

The quantitative analysis has subsequently been developed in R and in Microsoft Excel, as well as the qualitative analysis. At a basic level, tweets have been coded by type as:

- 'Original tweets:'
- 'Conversations,' furthermore if the tweet started directly with an @, thus being visible only to followers of both accounts, it has been coded as 'private' otherwise as 'public' conversation;
- Retweets.

Subsequently, the qualitative analysis has aimed to code the tweets based on their type and their content and the Twitter users based on their proximity to cultural institutions. Researchers analysing French user participation in both the 2014 and the 2015 edition of Museum Week had also coded both users (in 2014) and tweets (both in 2014 and 2015), progressively refining their coding system (Courtin et al. 2014, p. 7; 2015; Courtin & Foucault 2015, pp. 23-24; 2016). They categorised tweets according to four main categories: 'interactions between accounts,' 'encouraging contributions to contents.' 'promoting a museum,' and 'expressing an experience.' However, given the type of tweets in the Italian Museum Week 2016 and the aims of this paper, I adopted a different - though still comparable system. As reported in Table 1, each tweet has been assigned to a unique category (the most relevant one).

Users instead were coded according to the categories and sub-categories presented in

Tweet category	tegory Description					
Museum Week	Tweets focusing on the event or sharing the enthusiasm for being part of it					
Reflection on Museum Week	A few tweets reflecting on the Museum Week experience for the institutions involved					
Museum	Tweets communicating the museum, its collections (for example, photos of artefacts with short descriptions), and the work of its people (for example, photos of conservators at work, the 'museum life')					
Events	Tweets relating to specific events happening in the museum during that day					
Exhibitions	Invitations to visit the museum or participate in future events					
Commercial	Publicity by accounts not connected to the museums (e.g. restaurants, shops, hotels)					
Off-topic	Tweets completely off-topic					
Social	Conversations and networking, both between institutions and with the public					

Tab. 1. Tweet categories.

Table 2 (users were identified by the notes in their short biographies, hence this coding exercise has attempted to be the most precise as possible, but it is limited by users' choices in presenting themselves publicly). Again, this categorisation is comparable with that of Courtin (Courtin et al. 2014, p. 3), who coded the users as 'registered institutional organization' (corresponding to my 'M' category); 'professional of cultural organization (my 'MP' category); 'museogeeks;' 'private individual;' 'legal persons;' and 'non registered cultural heritage organization.' However, again this was adapted to the Italian situation and to the purposes of this research: for example, dividing individual users only between 'museogeeks' and 'private individual' would have not allowed me to capture the breadth and diversity of the participating users and highlight their different degree of involvement in the arts as well as by dividing between 'students and young professionals' and 'users with an interest' (both broadly corresponding to the French code for 'museogeeks') and other users.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that social media research is still a developing field, whose ethical implications has not yet been fully explored and thus ethical considerations should be an important part of any such studies. The author has followed the guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham

& Buchanan 2012) and of recent academic literature in the field (Kozinets 2010; Wilkinson & Thelwall 2011). This has meant anonymising individual Twitter users (the coding process considered the profile of the user, but this data is not made public and data are presented only in aggregate form). Additionally, tweets by individual users are not quoted in this paper, so as to avoid exposing the users: as argued by Hardey (2011), anonymity is lost in case of publication of social media messages, since these are searchable through Google.

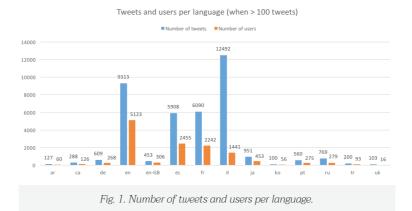
Museum Week 2016: the data

The following analysis focuses on the #loveMW hashtag, which characterised the last day of Museum Week, Sunday 3rd April. This archive includes 36,881 tweets, of which around 12,000 are from Italian users. Hence, the Italian tweets constitute slightly less than 30% of the total. However, when comparing the number of users active in each languagearea, it is easy to notice that more widespread languages such as English, Spanish, and French involved more users (Figure 1). By comparing the number of tweets with the number of users, it is evident that a few users produced a lot of tweets in the Italian case, against a higher engagement by users in other languages. Overall, 1,441 Italian users participated in #loveMW, and it was impossible to categorise precisely at least a third of the users (NA, NP),

Users category	Sub-categories
Heritage sector	 M: museum, archaeological site, cultural institution (incl. Mibact and political institutions, e.g. Comuni) or tourism offices MP: heritage professional (museum professional, archaeologist, institutional staff – i.e. working in soprintendenze and uffici cultura) G: cultural and/or local association
Н	Account presenting an historical character talking
т	Students and young professionals (including interns, volunteers, and short-term staff, i.e. <i>non-strutturati</i>)
Users with an interest	O(a): user with an explicit interest in the arts O(b): bloggers
'New audiences'	O: user with no explicit involvement in the arts O(c): commercial activities (e.g. hotels, restaurants, etc.)
Media	O(g): journalists O(l): media (newspapers, radio, and TV)
Not identified	NA: not available (i.e. biography section left blank)NP: not possible (i.e. biography section too vague to assign the user to a more precise category)

Tab. 2. Users categories and subcategories.

due to the lack of, or the vagueness of, their publicly available Twitter bio (Courtin et al. did not have this problem in 2014 because of their different coding process and categories). Museums and institutions represented the first clearly identified group of users engaging with the #loveMW hashtag (229 accounts), followed by 174 users who are not connected to museums and heritage institutions. Cultural associations, students and young professionals, users with



Count of users per categories

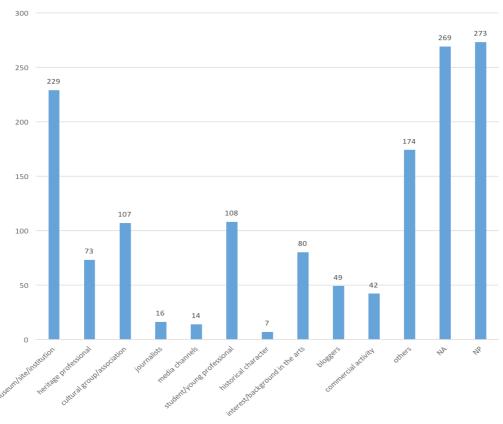


Fig. 2. Distribution of users per coding categories.

an explicit interest in the arts (though not necessarily working in the sector) and heritage professionals were also well represented (Figure 2). However, when thinking in terms of public engagement, it is also interesting to evaluate how many tweets each user contributed (Figure 3). Museums, museum professionals, and cultural associations contributed to 48% tweeting more than 500 times (Figure 4). Most of the accounts, independently from their category, did indeed tweet rarely. A third of the museum accounts did tweet only once, while another third tweeted between 2 and 5 times, and slightly less than a third tweeted more than 5 times. The role of museums as content creators during Museum Week emerges clearly

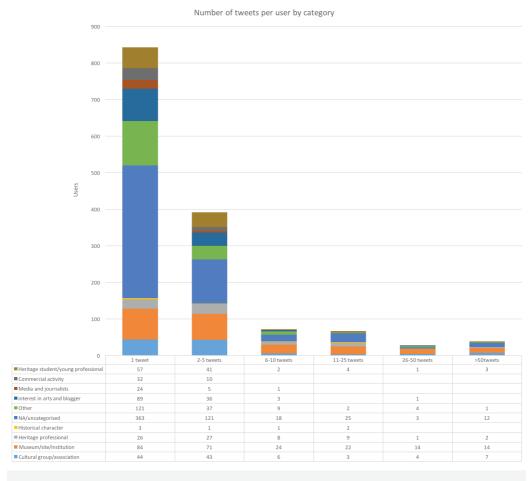


Fig. 3. Number of tweets per user category.

of the tweets, followed by 26% of tweets from uncategorised accounts, 5% by students and young professionals and another 5% by general public. Another factor to observe is the continuity of engagement: 59% of the users tweeted only once with the hashtag #loveMW, and another 32% sent less than ten tweets. On the other hand, 23 accounts sent more than a 100 tweets during the day, with three museums

when looking at the tweets: museums, cultural associations, and museum professionals were the ones creating the overwhelming majority of new tweets (1,147 out of 1,503), while most of the other user categories were only retweeting (Figure 5). This corresponds with what was observed in France in 2014, when museums were considered the most prolific 'authors' of the tweets, while other accounts were 'relaying'

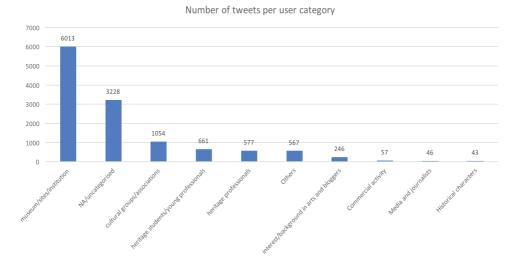
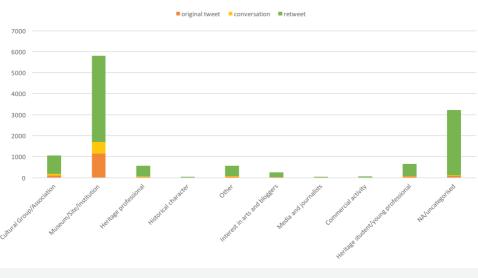


Fig. 4. Number of tweets sent by each user (counted by category).

content (Courtin et al. 2014, p. 3).

Additionally, most of the conversations happened within museums and users already established in the heritage sector, rather than with the wider public. The networking approach to #loveMW emerges clearly when looking at the coded content of the tweets (Figure 6). More than half of the original tweets were coded as 'social,' while almost a third concerned 'the

museum,' its collections, its stories, and its work. Furthermore, also by comparing the content of institutions and their staff against that of general members of the public, including students, young professionals, and media (and excluding instead the account that were not clearly categorised), it emerges that a higher percentage of tweets coded as 'socialising' was sent by institutions and heritage professionals



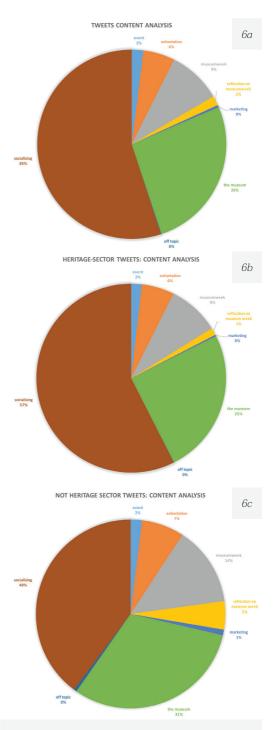
Type of tweets by user category

Fig. 5. Type of tweet per user category.

(Figures 7-8). This could probably be explained by the many conversations that, as mentioned above. happened between institutional accounts that were supporting each other during the social media campaign. On the other hand, the general public, and particularly students and young professionals, tweeted slightly more about museums themselves (i.e. by sharing photos of places and objects) and Museum Week. The analysis of the retweets, which is not fully developed in this paper, might change these preliminary results. Only 50 museums sent more than 10 tweets with the #loveMW hashtag.

However, if we look at how they divided those tweets, there appear to be some clearly different approaches (Table 3). Though there are undoubtedly variations in the number of original tweets, the museums that present the highest number of tweets do so because of their intense retweeting activity. Other museums chose instead to focus more on socialising and on conversing with other users. Despite differences in the approach, it is clear that there were a few museums leading the conversations and actively engaged in retweeting and dialoguing.

By focusing instead on the 'original tweets,' i.e. content created independently, a more variegated series of approaches emerge. In this case, it is clear that some museums chose to focus on communicating their institution, collections, and work, and shared many comments about Museum Week, but without engaging in close conversations. These museums chose also to privilege the broadcasting of their own institution, instead of focusing on talking with other museums (as mentioned above, the vast majority of the conversations happened among professionals and institutions, not with a wider audience). Five institutions generated the biggest number of tweets: Massaciuccoli Romana, Museo virtuale del Tevere, Museo Bergallo, Corona Arrubia, and Ufficio beni archeologici Trentino. The latter four of these shared altogether 2,028 tweets, 81% of which were retweets and 14% of which were conversations: Massaciuccoli generated 1,323 similarly,



Figs. 6a, 6b, and 6c. Content analysis of: the 'original' tweets, i.e. excluding RTs [a]; tweets posted by museums, sites, institutions, cultural groups/associations, and heritage professionals [b], and tweets sent by users not-belonging (or not yet belonging) to the heritage [c].

Museum	Events	Exhibitions	MW	Reflections on MW	Marketing	Museum	Social	RT
MassaciuccoliRo	2	-	14	3	-	38	264	1002
MVirtualeTevere	-	1	3	2	-	2	96	636
MuseoBergallo	2	9	13	1	-	11	42	492
Coronarrubia	7	9	9	-	-	19	96	244
Beniarcheo	-	3	-	2	-	10	52	267
museotattile_VA	-	-	1	-	-	-	73	171
MuseoArcheoCa	1	=	3	2	-	18	99	90
paestumparco	-	1	-	1	-	5	-	175
MuseoPiroga	1	1	1	1	-	3	34	94
MuseoRioElba	-	-	1	-	-	8	20	83
Museo_Setificio	-	-	3	2	-	4	62	14
MuseoCentRom	-	1	1	-	-	2	28	32
MiBACT	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	59
museodelviolino	-	1	17	-	-	30	7	3
PalazzoMazzetti	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	47
museiincomune	-	2	3	-	-	13	2	26
MuseodelCarbone	-	-	2	-	-	4	10	30
MuseoCalatia	-	-	1	-	-	2	3	34
MuseoMontefalco	-	-	-	_	-	4	1	33
QueriniVenezia	-	1	-	-	-	2	9	25
MuseiFvg	1	11	-	1	_	6	-	15
museomatthaes	1	-	-	-	-	-	_	32
MuseoSannaSS		1	2	_	_	2	8	20
museosansevero		-	-			2	-	28
CMorosiere	-	-	-	_	-	1	_	28
fondsrr		3	13		_	5	3	3
MuseiCiviciRE		-	1			6	1	18
PalazzoRealeNap	-	1	1	-		1	1	22
Reggiace		2			_	6	9	8
Museo_MADRE	_	1	1	_	_	7	4	11
PatrimonioFVG	-	-	2	-	_	10	2	8
			1			3	3	12
Museo_MAME MuseiRealiTo			1			4	1	12
TrasimenoLake			-			-	2	16
PoloMusealeAS		-		-	-	1	3	13
museoAccorsi		-	1	1	-	5	3	6
Mucast_Masso	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	12
msncalci	1		-	-	-			
Mibact_ER	-	1	-	-	-	1 7	1	10
MusaUnisalento	-	-	-	- 1	-	7	3	3
ortobotanicoBG	-	- 1	-	1	-	-	-	12
MuseoMaga	3	1	2	-	-	4	-	2
rivolicast	1	-	-	-	-	3	1	7
MATSanSevero	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	9
MuseoFRaC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
AlcaMaglie	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	4
ItalyinGermany	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
MuseoCanapa	-	-	3	1	-	2	3	2
MuseoEgizio	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	2
turismotorino	-	=	=-	-	-	=	=	11

Tab. 3. Museums that tweeted more than 10 times using the #loveMW hashtag: tweets content analysis.

tweets, of which 76% were retweets and 20% were conversations. By removing retweets and tweets coded as 'social' from the graph, it emerges among the remaining tweets a focus around the 'museum' (in the case of the Ufficio beni archeologici Trentino, this also included heritage sites) and a general participation and enthusiasm for the week. The unusual high number of tweets relating to an 'event' (indeed, the highest on the day) by Corona Arrubia is explained by the fact that the museum hosted a talk with the NGO Emergency and live-tweeted part of it (Figure 9).

Conclusion

This paper has presented some data on the Italian participants and messages during Museum Week 2016, and it has particularly focused on the last day of the week, dedicated to #loveMW. Despite the limitations implied by this selection, this research has added new data to the approach of Italian museums and cultural institutions to social media.

Three points seems worth discussing which highlight challenges for the future use of social media in Italian museums (and beyond):

the lack of a clear social media strategy in generating content;

- the lack of a clear understanding of museum audiences on social media:
- the lack of shared definitions of engagement and metrics to measure it.

The discussion emphasized how some museums, despite the huge number of tweets sent, were mostly focusing inward - to a peer audience - mentioning and retweeting each other while engaging in 'networking,' rather than in proposing precise and carefully planned content to the public. This aspect had been noted also in the latest research by Civita, which commented that "in alcuni casi, il social è stato usato in forma bi-direzionale ma non verso il pubblico del museo quanto per accrescere l'interazione con altre strutture museali" (Valentino 2016, p. 40) and linked this trend towards internal networking between Italian museums to the experience of Museum Week 2014. Also Lo Blundo (2016), commenting on Museum Week 2016, argued that Italian museums focused too much on what she calls 'self-referential' contents (i.e. reactions to, and conversations between, museums), which broadly correspond to my code for 'social' tweets and to the retweets, rather than on messages presenting the museum and providing content for different audiences. Indeed, the abundance of 'social' tweets, most of which are



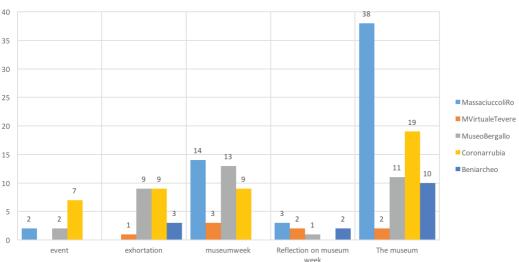


Fig. 9. Content analysis of the tweets by five of the most active museums: Massaciuccoli Romana, Museo Virtuale del Tevere, Museo Bergallo, Museo Sa Corona Arrubia, Ufficio Beni Archeologici della Provincia di Trento.

conversations between museums, in parallel to a lack of tweets catering for different audiences and encouraging user-generated content is also one the aspects emerged from my analysis.

Furthermore, Italian museums do not seem to have clear objectives set for each of their social media platforms (again, noted also in Valentino 2016, pp. 43-44), and the lack of clarity on the characteristic, purpose, potential, and limitations of different social media channels is reflected by their activities on Twitter during Museum Week. As noted, despite the huge numbers of tweets sent from Italian accounts, the number of Italian users is inferior to those of other language groups, and also countries with lower participation present a better engagement rate. While this data could be explained by noting the different diffusion of Twitter in Italy in comparison to other countries (as noted above), more interactions could be encouraged by focusing more on engaging new audiences (by prompting their responses; starting a conversation in response to their posts; etc.), rather than continuing to interact with a smaller circle of users.

I would also argue that, alongside the growth of digital skills in the sector which is being actively promoted by different groups and agencies, there is a need also for a more in-depth and critical use of social media analytics. Particularly, this means also going beyond metrics derived from the marketing sector (such as the use of KPIs and ROI), which though important, do not fully respond to the needs of the heritage sector. For example, in the case of Museum Week it has been argued that this event aimed to raise the profile of museums on Twitter and many professionals have spoken of the value of this and similar initiatives for improving public awareness, engagement with, and support of museums. However, analytics such as those proposed in this paper demonstrate the limited effect of Museum Week outside the sector: trending on Twitter because of the intense activity of professionals is not sufficient when the effects on our audiences are not measured. In this sense, though observing followers' growth (for example, one of the most active museums gained 50 followers during Sunday 3rd April) and the number of retweets and likes is important, each institution should also evaluate them in relation to their own aims and to the visitors they are actually targeting and receiving.

On the other hand, this research has also emphasised:

- 1. the great enthusiasm and involvement of Italian museums and professionals in the Museum Week campaign;
- 2. the many and good relationship between different museums and their staff:
- an increasing attention to storytelling, moving away from simple information broadcasting.

As argued above, Italian museums had a substantial involvement in Museum Week 2016, generating a huge numbers of tweets. By focusing much of their activities on networking and responding to each other, they also demonstrated the multiple relations across different institutions all over Italy that have been enabled by social media campaigns in recent years. Additionally, though there is not yet a coherent and substantial presence of storytelling activities on their accounts, museums did, in a few cases, draw on storytelling to present themselves, their staff, and their activities. Thus, I would conclude this short analysis of Museum Week 2016 with an optimistic perspective on the use of social media in Italian museums.

Museum Week 2016 has highlighted the potential and enthusiasm of Italian cultural institutions for social media campaigns (proved also by the involvement of Italian institutions in similar hashtag-based campaigns, such as #askacurator). However, this analysis has also revealed that in order to avoid wasting efforts and resources and disconnecting from their audiences, Italian museums need to develop a better awareness of digital platforms and their potential in the sector: aims and purposes of each platform and campaign should be critically evaluated, going beyond the measurement of number of likes, followers, etc.; digital engagement should also be more clearly defined as well as the metrics to understand it (whether the aim is that of networking, engaging new audiences, communicating the museum, etc.) so to develop effective strategies for social media evaluation. Qualitative data should complement quantitative data, so that social media strategies could draw on a better understanding of heritage audiences, their attitudes and their needs when engaging with cultural institutions on social networking sites.

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