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Exploring Museums Communication through Social Media:

A Comparative Study of the British Museum in London and the Archaeological Museum in Venice

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Daniela Cesiri

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Francesca Coccetta

Graduand

Giorgia Cianfanelli

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893766

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Social Media have become an essential tool for everyday life, being employed for personal use and for promotion, audience engagement and spreading of information. Throughout history, museums have relied on different kinds of communication to inform their audience about exhibitions and news related to the institution. Thanks to new technologies, communication began to include websites and social media platforms (Russo and Watkings, 2005; Mandarano, 2009; Arora, 2015; Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015). Data for this study was collected through a systematic analysis of the two museums' Instagram accounts. By analysing the Instagram channels of the British Museum and the National Archaeological Museum of Venice, the study aims to understand the language and communication strategies used and evaluate their efficacy in engaging diverse audiences. In particular, the purpose of the study is to analyse the language utilized in the captions and the relationship with the images, in order to gain insight into the communication approaches of the two museums. Moreover, by investigating how trends and humor are employed, the aim is to understand how museums adapted their communication to social media platforms. The findings of this study contribute to an understanding of effective social media communication strategies for cultural institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Museums have always been considered central to preserving heritage for future generations (Pearce, 1992; Muensterberger, 1994). For locals and tourists, museums are considered institutions where art, history and culture are exhibite. Their contribution to society is of great importance since they have an educational aim and create a bridge between past and present (Özdemir and Çelebi, 2017).

Social media have managed to help museums spread their message in the world and share with people news about research, exhibits, events and museums' collections (Özdemir and Çelebi, 2017). The use of these platforms also makes all the information provided by museums accessible to anyone and gives the audience the possibility to share their opinions and become active participants in the museum experience (Özdemir and Çelebi, 2017; Russo and Watkings, 2005).

Today, museums use social media to keep up with the digital era and gain more visibility to attract visitors. Moreover, in order to remain relevant and engage their audiences, social media pages have to adapt to current internet trends and find new ways to catch their attention, and employing humor is one of the possible ways to do it (McCullough et al., 1993; Chan and Lowe, 2021).

Over the years, studies highlighted the positive effects of humor on education, in particular, it is linked to source liking, and teacher and subjects' appreciation (Gruner, 1967; Bryan and Zillmann, 1989).

Humor is often connected to promotion and advertising, and although there are mixed opinions on the subject, most advertisers consider it a useful tool that creates positive reactions in customers and boosts sales (Romell and Segedi, 2022; Weinberger and Gulas, 1992).

Not many studies have been conducted regarding the use of humor in museums' social media. Mostly, humor's role in social media has been investigated in the context of reducing the impact of negative comments (Yu et al. 2022), politics (Heiss and Matthes, 2019; Davis et al., 2018) and science and health (Wang and Pavelko, 2023; Yeo et al. 2021). In the cases in which museum communication is investigated, it mostly regards its use on Twitter (Mosca et al., 2018; Romolini, 2020) or Facebook

(Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015; Mahony, 2017; Mosca et al., 2018; Romolini, 2020¸Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk, 2021).

A recent study (Romell and Segedi, 2022) analysed the use of humor as a social media strategy, and according to the findings, the incorporation of humor is successful in most cases. It was particularly underlined that online users look for humorous content, especially young people.

In light of the considerations mentioned above about the role of humor and the lack of research focused particularly on its use in museums' social media, this study aims to investigate the use of humor and internet trends in this context. The research is based on finding common patterns in language and communication strategies employed to engage the audience.

In particular, a discourse analysis of the social media profiles of the British Museum and the Archaeological Museum of Venice was conducted utilizing Gee's (2014) toolkit to observe the similarities and diversities of the two approaches and the role played by humor in museum promotion. The profiles taken into consideration are on Instagram, a social media that was less investigated in this type of communication analysis.

This study is composed of an introduction, five chapters, and conclusions. Chapter One illustrates museums' history, definitions, and role in society. Then their connection to technologies and presence on social media is dealt with. Moreover, the Chapter includes a study of humor's characteristics and its role in promotional and educational settings.

Chapter Two deals with the history of the British Museum and the Archaeological Museum of Venice. It then gives some insights into tourism in the cities of Venice and London and an overview of the two museums' social media, namely the Instagram pages.

In Chapter Three the methodology for the Discourse Analysis is explained and the theoretical background of the Analysis is described. Then, Gee's (2014) toolkit is illustrated with the five tools chosen to conduct the study.

In Chapter Four a Discourse Analysis of the museums' Instagram pages is conducted by employing the following five tools from Gee (2014): the Fill In Tool, the

Identities Building Tool, the Connections Building Tool, the Intertextuality Tool, and the Significance Building Tool.

In Chapter Five the general discussion of the Analysis, the first conclusions and the limitations of the study and further possibilities for future research are presented.

The Conclusions are the last part of the research, and they present a sum of all the relevant findings.

CHAPTER ONE

Museums' Communication and Social Media

1. Introduction to Museums

Museums are institutions committed to preserving history, heritage, and knowledge. They were born out of people's innate need to make sense of the world around them, by collecting and organizing objects. Museums also function as spaces where people's identities are stored to preserve their memories for future generations, and where national identity is constructed through a deep exploration into their ancestry. Therefore, through their narratives, museums solidify visitors' sense of belonging and national identity (Pearce, 1992; Muensterberger, 1994).

Moreover, they present collections, which are the heart and purpose of the museums' activities, and represent sets of objects selected, displayed, and classified by professionals with specific intents and meanings (Simmons, 2020; Zou, 2022). When inserted in the collection context, objects are 'musealized', namely, 'they have been removed from their original natural or cultural environment to become part of the collection' (Desvallées and Mairesse 2010), acquiring a different cultural meaning. The process involves the studying of objects to understand the new context (Simmons, 2020; Vergo, 1989). These collections enable museums to narrate stories and supply their audience with new or more detailed information about a specific topic. In addition, museums, as institutions, serve as an interactive environment for cultural promotion (Zou, 2022).

Since the birth of museums, the majority of exhibits were generally available only to a selected group of powerful and aristocratic individuals, and only some exhibits were accessible to the whole population (Wittlin, 1949). Museums are then born out of the will to make private collections open to the public and dispose them to fulfill their purpose (Simmons, 2010).

The starting point for all public museums has always been the goal to obtain a learning outcome out of the museum experience, opening collections to the public and expecting them to gain educational benefits from the experience (Hein, 1998, Vergo,

1989). Moreover, museums, connecting the institution with the nation, aim to create a universal memory (Brown and Mairesse, 2018).

Wittlin (1949) divided the history of museum education in Europe into two periods. The first one goes from the middle of the nineteenth century to World War I in which the focus was on promoting national strength, while the second one coincides with the period of time between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II, in which a big growth in museum education occurred and the focus was put on nationalistic topics and advancement of science and art as well. During the Renaissance, private collections began to spread. A big push towards the creation of the public museum was initiated with the French Revolution when private collections began to be expanded to the general public. Then, museums were regarded as the holders of knowledge and as places, the audience must turn to gain universal knowledge (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Consequently, the passage from private collections to public museums marked a growth in enthusiasm with the possibility of creating an environment with equal learning opportunities (Simmons, 2010).

Museums were born in the period that became known as the Modern period. This led to the usage of the term 'modern museum', to support forms of knowledge that could be always available and reliable (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). The ultimate goal of a modernist museum was to be a referenceable encyclopedia for society. It was also divided into two separate spaces, one public and one private. The public space was the place where people could gain knowledge, available to the general public. On the other hand, the private space coincided with the place where knowledge was created (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

Museums have been defined in different ways, mirroring various cultural perceptions (Brown and Mairesse, 2018). They have been designated as 'places of memory' (Nora, 1984 cit. in Desvallées and Mairesse 2010:58), 'non-profit institutions', 'with an educational in purpose', and exhibitions 'the heritage of humanity' (Simmons, 2016). Moreover, like other cultural organizations, museums have been defined as anchor institutions due to their fundamental role in the cultural development of their area (Ruggiero et al., 2022). According to Brown (2019), museums amplify local development for communities and individuals' well-being by

creating an environment of social inclusion and providing a sense of identity for visitors.

The three primary functions attributed to museums are preservation, research, and communication (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010). **Preservation** is a synonym for protection, and in this case, it involves using all the tools at the museum's disposal to protect objects from being damaged, ruined, stolen, or separated. This procedure begins the moment the object is first brought into the museum and is acquired. This also includes administrative processes, since objects are recorded in the museums' catalog or registered in the inventory to be part of the institution. The other concepts connected to preservation are conservation and restoration. Conservation regards the procedure to follow for the object to remain unvaried and to guarantee this status for future audiences. This is considered the core mission of museums since it aims to protect the culture for the benefit of current and future generations. On the other hand, restoration is considered if the object suffered from some form of deterioration with time. It involves all the work need to make the use and understanding of an object easier (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010).

Research is linked to studying and discovering the museums' collections and their potential development. Davallon (1995 cit. in Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010:74) identified four different categories of research in museums. The first category relies on the subject of museums' collections, and it can be linked to disciplines such as art, science, and history. The second category involves research linked to disciplines disconnected from the world of museology, useful for the development of conservation tools for the museum. The third category involves a reflection on the use of museums, their mission and their contribution to society. Finally, the fourth category regards the heritage and communication sides of the institution, involving disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics, and sociology (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010).

Museums always tell a story, and museum communication needs the audience's active participation to be effective. Communication in this context is usually unilateral since the museum communicates its message while the audience receives it. Museal communication often relies on visual language rather than on verbal language, it consists of what the public is looking at (Giaccardi, 2012).

Among the key features of museums is the public service they offer to society and its development, and their collections are considered the heart of the museums. However, exhibits are their defining trait, representing what differentiates museums from other public service organizations. Exhibits are physical environments that fully embody the essence of museums. Furthermore, objects are curated and specifically designed to facilitate a knowledge transfer experience aligned with the exhibit's purpose (Dillenburg, 2011; Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010). Museums consist of the objects that form the collections, the professionals working in the museum, and the public, all integral to their functioning. (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010).

According to Cameron (1968:33), the museum is a space where 'real things' are preserved. He defines 'real things' as the objects and art exhibited in museums in their authentic form and not as a representation of something else (Cameron, 1968). This is what distinguishes museums' communication from other communication systems. One major aspect of museums' influence on their audience is the creation of bridges between different nations and cultures through cultural tourism and diplomatic dialogue, thereby creating a significant impact on people's cultural values (Grincheva, 2013).

Scholars also emphasized the importance of the role of the museum as an educational institution. Zeller (1989) identified three main museums' missions, which are the educational museum, the social museum, and the aesthetic museum. Goode (1888) argued that museums should serve as institutions for public education and promote ideas. On the other hand, Gilman (1924 cit. in Hein, 2007:343) prioritized the aestheticism and contemplation of the beauty of museums over their educational purpose. He also introduced the professional figure of docents, people with the task of informing visitors about the exhibition's content.

Overall, the nineteenth century represented a year of growth and enrichment for museums, and it is indeed known as the 'Golden Age' (Bazin, 1967) for museums in Europe (Simmons, 2010; Alexander, 2008). This concept was born out of the major growth of museums in the second half of the nineteenth century. From this century and onwards, museums, heavily promoted by governments, started to display their art following specific itineraries that could be followed and understandable for the public's visit with specific outcomes in mind. Since that time, it has become crucial

for visitors to understand exhibits and their signals and symbols in order to really appreciate what the museum wants to express (Vergo, 1989; Zou, 2022; Alexander, 2008).

The museum institution was founded on four main principles. The first one states that the collection presented in the museum should elevate the knowledge of who is witnessing it, while the second one states that a collection must always be organized following a systematic scheme of classification. The third principle expresses that a group of people should administer the museum on behalf of the public. Finally, according to the fourth principle emphasized that people should be able to easily access the institution (Vergo, 1989).

Furthermore, as it has been stated, there is always an exchange between the museum's collection and its audience. Every communication system has a source and a target between whom the message is exchanged. Cameron (1968) associated museums with communications systems in which there is a source, the exhibitor, a medium, the 'real things' or artifacts, and the receiver, the audience. Differently, Hooper-Greenhill (2000) recognized the curator of the collection as the sender of the message, which always expressed a didactic purpose, and the audience as the receiver of the message.

Tourism museum plays a fundamental role in creating an environment where individuals can reconnect with their cultural and national identities. It implements their identification in a collective identity through the sharing of their past, and heritage is understood as a symbol of people's identities and nationalities (Vassiliadis and Belenioti, 2015).

Finally, the reasons people choose to visit museums are quite diverse and varied, depending on the type of visitor. It has been attested that the majority of people visiting a museum do so because they are interested in an exhibit or in the subject of the museum, or because of an interest in cultural enrichment. Meanwhile, others visit museums for social reasons, or as part of their itinerary while on vacation, they are usually people who do not often go to museums in their leisure time. Furthermore, the more often a group of people goes to the museum, the more probable it is they are usual visitors of cultural heritage sites and are interested in acquiring cultural

knowledge since the museum experience is also associated with being a person of culture (Vergo, 1989).

1.1 Museum communication and its history

A museum, by its definition, is born out of the need to communicate something to its visitors. It is also an institution that is never static but keeps evolving according to cultural changes (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991). Museums have always engaged with their audience through their exhibits, establishing a unique dialogical relationship with their visitors (Cameron, 1968). However, museums communicate through various channels. For instance, through mass media, broadcasting on radio and television, and by publishing articles. They also do so through their buildings, by promoting events, and through the museum shop (Strong, 1983 cit. in Calderon, 1990:137). Therefore, to communicate, museums need three actors: the curator who gives shape to the exhibit, someone to transmit the educational information to, and the exhibit (Bernardo, 1972 cit. in Calderon, 1990:137).

Among the most prominent studies regarding museum communication, Calderon (1990) investigated the study carried out by the Royal Ontario Museum (1976) to set guidelines for successful museum communication. The study focused on strategies for museums to efficiently communicate with their audience, detecting seven different approaches. The approaches are **education**, **orientation**, **galleries**, **public areas**, **staff**, **communication devices**, and **themes** (Calderon, 1990). Starting with the **education** approach, the Royal Ontario Museum suggests the creation of different programs, one for schools, aiming to attract students and educators, and one for non-school tours. The aid of pamphlets and other resources is also suggested to engage so the audience can engage with the content of the exhibition. With **orientation**, the goal is to prepare visitors for the upcoming exhibits by supplying them with related materials and then supporting them during and after their visit, through aids such as museum maps and indications. **Galleries** and **public areas** also have to be considered, since their conditions have a direct impact on the visitors' educational experience and their enjoyment. The **staff** approach directly involves the museum's workers, whose attitude, appearance, and preparation impact tourists' visits. The staff's ability to give

great service in their profession and create a positive outcome is consequently influenced by the level of clarity and efficiency offered by the museum's directors. The staff's involvement in the institution's activities also improves the environment.

In addition to that, museums communicate with their audience through different media. At first, press releases started to be utilized to promote museums' exhibitions as a means to strengthen the institution's relationship with its audience. In particular, Exhibition press announcements (EPAs), their typical feature, and the development of their language have been recently investigated to understand how the language in museum communication has changed. This investigation gives the public more insights into not only the linguistic features of press releases but also about the cultural context and the influence of technologies (Lazzaretti, 2016; Lazzaretti and Bondi, 2012).

The promotion field is strongly linked to marketing strategies, such as the creation of catchy titles, attention-grabbing images, and creative texts. In this case, journalists were being addressed as if they were customers. EPAs regard general news, information about exhibitions, awards, events, and announcements of seasonal programs. In their investigation, Lazzaretti and Bondi (2012) address Exhibition Press Announcements' online publications, noting that press releases online show a hybrid nature (informative and promotional) and communicate directly with the audience, easily reaching marketing goals. Exhibition press announcements have also been useful for journalists who were not able to attend specific exhibitions but were able to obtain information about them through these announcements. Through an insightful corpus analysis, they identified four main semantic categories related to EPAs: novelty, quality and importance, extensiveness and quantity, specialty, and exclusiveness. The aim of all of these semantic categories is to attract the audience, creating a narrative that describes the exhibition as something that is impossible to miss. The frequency of use of adjectives and nouns with a positive evaluation of the exhibition as well as emotional linguistic features, was also observed. Through the use of positive evaluation, readers are more prone to visit the exhibitions.

Furthermore, Hooper-Greenhill (2000) identified two communication patterns that museums can adopt, following the communication theory. According to this theory, it is possible to view communication as a process of transmission on one side

and communication as a part of culture on the other side. The modern museum aimed at communicating with its audience for educational purposes and it wanted to reach this goal by utilizing the transmission communication model. This communication model is a one-way model, and it implies the existence of a sender of the information, which is the museum in this case, and represents the authority, and a receiver of the information, usually not informed about the subject of the information (Morgan and Welton, 1986). This way of communicating is reflected, for example, in the role of the curator when exhibitions are created. The curator is the expert of the artistic exhibit while the audience is the receiver of the art message and can obtain new information through the communication experience. The exhibits also always express values, which the audience has to interpret and give meaning to. Regarding the concept of communication as an essential aspect of culture, and view communication as a series of processes for creating meaning in everyday life. Moreover, this model recognizes the existence of very different perspectives of the world and different strategies to understand it. There is also a distinction between what is called high and low culture. The concept of high culture is associated with elevated values, while mass culture is associated with the culture of everyday life (Hooper-Greenhill, 1996). According to Carey (1992), communication is a series of different processes and an aspect of life through which reality is created and transformed.

Bhatia's study (2004) shows how promotional discourse belongs to multiple genres, also to some 'hybrid genres' such as press releases, and how this genre has a great influence on the language employed. Promotional discourse is heavily linked to the spreading of new technologies, which encourage the use of creative language. The relationship between digital communication and the public has been widely studied, finding that this bond influences a brand's reputation. Thanks to digital platforms, visitors had the chance to become protagonists of museums, while before they were seen as passive participants of the museum experience, simply assimilating what the museum authoritatively taught them (Jo and Jung, 2005).

At the start of the nineteenth century, museums' importance started to be connected to preserving a nation's legacy, setting up a great affluence to the institution (Simmons, 2020). In the 1950s art experts began to be hired by editors to work on newspapers' specific sections. By the end of World War II, the role of the museum was

regarded with great importance, since it had both an educational role and an entertaining role (Lazzaretti, 2016). The years 1960-1980 witnessed the rise of museums as great sources for the tourism industry, while from 1970 museum managers started to utilize marketing strategies with an informative aim. After 1980, marketing strategies expanded to a need to focus on the audience's need and increase it, and to an entertainment type of approach (Vassiliadis and Belenioti, 2015).

Public relations are linked to marketing strategies since they are created to influence the public's views and behaviors toward institutions. The primary aim of marketing is to influence people, while public relations focus on shaping, maintaining, or changing public opinions, which then affect behavior toward the organization or its products. Kotler and Mindak (1978) note that these two concepts are not as distinct as they used to be, and as a result, addressing a marketing issue can sometimes be achieved through public relations.

Between 1980 and 1990 public relations were sent via fax. Progressively, scanned documents and images sent to e-mail accounts started to be employed, and then websites were created in order to communicate, as a digital extension of museum brochures (Lazzaretti, 2016). By the end of the nineteenth century, the "new museum" idea was born, putting this institution as the main core of education and research. Through new technologies, museums were able to fulfill their cultural role in different ways and through different means (Simmons, 2010).

Nowadays, there is no sharp distinction between the physical museum and the digital museum, they are part of the same institution. The digitalization of collections and the development of multimedia systems are essential to ensure the best accessibility of the exhibits (Mandarano, 2019).

In order to keep up with the changes the era of the internet brought, museums have started to use social media to communicate with their audience. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are among the most used (Arora, 2015). The concept behind the use of these media is to spread information and promote the museums' collections and events to a wider audience. It is a way to get museum visitors from all over the world to take part in the museum even though they will never see it in person. The technological process is also a way for museums to be a relevant part

of society and fulfill their role in service of society's development and also provides museums with an important active presence online (Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015).

1.2 Museums and Social Media

Nowadays it is impossible to speak about promoting cultural heritage without recognizing technology and technological innovations' potential, especially the power of the web and social media in disseminating knowledge (Mandarano, 2019). Art institutions' presence on social media is particularly effective due to these platforms' capacity to create content with a high chance of going viral and to reduce uncertainty about the validity of the brand (Hausmann, 2012).

In this regard, the rise of Web 2.0 brought many changes to society and how it interacts with informative content. Its relevance is highlighted in tourism, defined as an "information-intensity industry" fueled by travelers' stories and suggestions for other travelers (Wang et al., 2002). Social media are usually regarded as an extra tool to support older marketing strategies for promotion purposes (Gretzel, 2006).

Initially, museums did not create the environment to involve visitors as active participants in the museum experience. This changed with the spread of new media, which paved the way for brand new ways for visitors to interact with museums' contents (Russo and Watkins, 2005). Thanks to social media, institutions can now reach people from all over the world and at a faster speed, developing a strong and diverse community that will be influenced by the content posted (Hays et al., 2013).

Moreover, according to Russo and Watkins (2009) the use of social media for cultural institutions helps in maintaining museums relevant in time, and in increasing their authority. Museums have indeed employed social media to promote their institutions by advertising exhibitions and cultural events through social media to the extent that Kidd (2011) distinguished three social media frames utilized by museums for their communication. They are the marketing frame, the inclusivity frame, and the collaborative frame. The marketing frame is related to the use of social media to disseminate useful information about events and exhibitions, creating a social community among the followers, and encouraging them to establish a deeper connection with the institution and the activities organized. The development of

technology and how society related to it, led social communication to vary a lot from press releases communication (Lazzaretti, 2016). The inclusivity frame regards how social media can help audiences gather around institutions forming a cohesive community. Finally, the collaborative frame is about the significant presence of the audience in the decision-making of museums' activities. Through this frame, the opinion of the audience becomes essential in the institutions' possible improvements. Story-making projects are often utilized within this frame, focusing on the narration of communities and their heritages (Kidd, 2011).

Additionally, an important concept linked to social media is 'content sharing', as it is a fundamental activity on these platforms. Communication strategies are employed by single users and also by cultural organizations, including museums, to disseminate knowledge on various topics, publicize events and exhibitions, and reach new audiences (Amanatidis et al., 2020). The advancements in digitalization have transformed the relationship between social media and tourists, establishing online platforms as one of the primary sources for travelers. In particular, technology and social media are being used by institutions to create interaction between audiences and heritage artifacts (Simon, 2010).

Moreover, edutainment — the practice of creating a gaming experience in other contexts — has spread in this sector as well. Another benefit of using social media for information dissemination is the speed at which information can be shared. This allows for a quick way of communicating with the audience and redirects museums to adjust their activities according to the visitors' preferences and feedback (Fletcher and Lee, 2012).

Social media has been proven to be a tool predominately utilized by young people, especially those aged 15 to 25, also referred to as "the digital generation" (Tapscott, 1999). They created digital spaces where they can share information and access them at any moment. This type of online interaction has also been defined as "participatory culture" by Jenkins (2006). In participatory culture, the focus is placed on the involvement of the community, through collaborative and expressive activities connected to the culture.

Young people use these platforms for generating and sharing content, engaging with others, and also for educational purposes. These activities are fundamental for

identity formation in young people. Social media creates an environment of self-discovery and connection with peers, thus creating communities that share similar interests (Giaccardi, 2012). Moreover, social media offers young individuals the opportunity to reflect on their culture and ethnicity, interacting with individuals of similar or diverse ethnic backgrounds. This way, users can explore their cultural identities without having the issue of in-person confrontation, and engage in positive, reflective learning experiences about themselves (Shaw and Krug, 2013).

In the 1990s, museum marketing and communication were primarily focused on disseminating information to the public. The main reasons behind museums' marketing expansion were technological innovations and an increasing presence of museums' audiences (Lazzaretti, 2016).

As previously discussed, education, obtained through engagement, is one of social media's major benefits. Studies have shown that through social networks, audiences benefit from the content posted, enhancing their learning and knowledge (Vassiliadis and Belenioti, 2017). According to Pett (2012), there are five factors of efficient social media use: Credibility, Consistency, Tolerance to criticism, Integration, and Alignment between online and offline communication.

Furthermore, social network sites' strategies have been investigated concluding that the key strategies are awareness, comprehension, and engagement. Awareness is a short-term outcome strategy aimed at attracting audiences and giving visibility to the institution. Comprehension involves explaining the museum's mission and activities to the audience and, thereby establishing a relationship with it. Engagement aims to foster discussions and interaction around the museum (Chung et al, 2014).

It has been noted that engagement is fundamental in informal learning practices (Wenger, 1998). In their study, O'Brien and Toms (2008) applied the notion of engagement in terms of the usability of technology, defining the engagement factor as an experience designated by characteristics such as interactivity, perceived user control, endurability, positive affect, and attention.

Scholars have described three ideal engagement modes to effectively influence followers. The first mode involves providing informative and educational descriptions of museum objects and activities. The second one aims to offer information about the overall context in which the museum is located, such as cultural traditions. Finally, the

third mode engages audiences with interesting facts to captivate and educate them at the same time (Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015).

Moreover, to inform and educate people, it has been discovered that the most successful strategy is to elicit an emotional response from them, such as laughter or commotion. Amusement is entertaining and attracts the public, convincing it to continue reading the text and obtain something from it (Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015; Beard, 2008). Every information in museums is related to their specific collections and the nature of the museum. Given their educational nature, the addressee of the social media posts can vary, from someone who attends museum exhibitions religiously to someone not interested in museums but attracted by effective social media marketing (Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015).

Marketing as an engagement tool is utilized with specific categories of content, such as the promotion of events and information about the museum, and the implementation of gaming activities to attract users to participate in an untypical form of museum communication (Berthon et al., 2012). Additionally, content-wise, engagement is obtained by communicating about the institution and the people involved in it and updating museums' services, opening hours, and digital resources. Social media use also generates multi-way and two-way communication (Fletcher and Lee, 2012). Viral marketing strategies help the audience spread word-of-mouth via social media, which is limitless, unlike word-of-mouth communication in person (Hausmann, 2019).

Furthermore, it is important to underline that museums are one of those institutions that rely deeply on the relationship they establish with their visitors, since tourists, donors, and volunteers are essential figures for its existence (Fletcher and Lee, 2012).

Based on previous research, the suggested strategies for social media promotion for museums and cultural institutions are fostering networks and connections, being open to taking risks, recognizing that by creating a healthy community it will self-regulate, acknowledging that certain areas will still require structured oversight, and learning from user feedback (Kelly, 2009).

Concerning museums' promotion, viral marketing is a popular approach utilized in social media communication. It promotes among users the spreading of marketing

information received on the social platform. In this approach, the actions of the "customers" are essential, since institutions base the marketing approach on the public's networks and word-of-mouth (Helm, 2001; Buttle, 1998).

Kent and Taylor (1998) based the relationship between organizations and their audiences using dialogical communication as a theoretical framework. They also established five different principles for successful online dialogical communication: the dialogic loop, usefulness of the information, generation of return visits, rule of conservation of visitors, and intuitiveness of the interface. The dialogic loop creates a dialog between organizations and the public, in a state of ongoing exchange of information. When dialogic communication is utilized correctly on an institutional page, making it interactive, then it becomes a reliable and official space for users to interact. This helps the transmission of information, sharing of comments and opinions, and evaluating and having a confrontation based on experiences. The principles are founded on two main aspects of online institutional communication: content management and interaction management. In the context of social platforms, it is not only the organization spreading the information that they consider important, the public gains more power in deciding which content is more useful and also creating their own spaces. Moreover, digital tools have helped establish a multilateral relationship between institutions and the public, nurturing interactions and negotiation (Capriotti, 2011).

1.3 Humor

Humor can be described as something that induces amusement, such as laughter or feelings of happiness (Warren et al., 2018). Its primary function is the release of emotions and feelings that contribute positively to our well-being and overall health (Reyes et al., 2012). The perception of humor, however, is influenced by culture, age, and gender so the same humorous message can be viewed as two different types of humor by different people (Romell and Segedi, 2022).

Humor has already been used and continues to be used in advertising contexts (Weinberger and Gulas, 1992, Romell and Segedi, 2022). According to Speck (1987), ads that use humor grab and hold the attention of the viewer in a more effective way than ads that do not use humor.

Suls (1972) divided humor into two-stage models, **detection** and **resolution of incongruity**, by giving the example of understanding humor in cartoons. At first, the audience encounters an incongruity, represented by the punch line. Then for the comprehension of the humorous message, it is needed to transform the initial incongruity situation into a congruous one through problem-solving and by finding a cognitive rule. By going through these two processes, the audience understands the meaning of the joke.

In this regard, Speck (1991) has also compiled a framework for analyzing humor's communication effects. Previously, research by Monro (1951), Keith-Spiegel (1972), McGhee (1972), and Morreall (1983) helped in distinguishing three different humor processes: **arousal-safety**, **incongruity-resolution,** and **humorous disparagement**. The **arousal-safety** process consists of a subject being put in a humorous situation and then the subject being relieved and losing any feeling of anxiety about the intention of the source. It has an emotional impact, and when it is fully developed, it involves arousal from a specific situation and person, feelings of uncertainty, a play signal, and a safety assessment. The **incongruity-resolution** process regards humor relying on incongruity, which happens when more aspects of a situation cannot be comprehended through a single framework or when an entire situation is in contradiction with what one expected. There are usually two possible explanations for its use, incongruity theories, and incongruity-then-resolution theories. Both theories present a first reaction of surprise or discrepancy in a situation, however, while the incongruity theories focus on disruption and contrast, incongruity-then-resolution approaches emphasize the moment of understanding and finding meanings. To sum it up, incongruity-resolution involves how a person interprets the humorous content and the relief they feel from any anxiety related to understanding it. Finally**, humorous disparagement** theories as described by Freud (2021) always imply three actors: a **joke-teller**, a **joke-hearer**, and a **victim**. Depending on the joke-teller's aim it is possible to find varieties of humorous disparagement, such as satire, put-down humor, or sarcasm. It requires a play manipulation, arousal linked to the act of disparagement, uncertainty about how to respond, and elements of incongruity-resolution that enable the necessary misattribution (Speck, 1991).

These three humor processes can act on their own or be combined with five

combinational humor types, which are **satire**, **sentimental humor**, **comic wit**, **sentimental comedy**, and **full comedy** (Speck, 1991). **Satire** requires the humor processes incongruity-resolution and humorous disparagement, **sentimental humor** only needs arousal-safety process, and **comic wit** requires the simple incongruity-resolution process. Then, **sentimental comedy** combines arousal-safety and incongruity-resolution, which generates the viewer's surprise. **Full comedy** needs all three humor processes (arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement), and it is the type of humor that catches the audience's attention the most. According to Speck (1991), when using humor types such as 'satire', 'sentimental comedy' or 'full comedy' did better than non-humorous types, while using 'comic wit' did worse. Speck (1991) explains how **comic wit** has a low emotional impact on the audience and only manages to bring a smile. However, **comic wit** performs well when utilized to create simple advertising messages, meaning that this type of humor creates higher recall and recognition but also catches the audience's attention less than other humor types (Leonidas et al., 2008).

In general, marketers view humor as the best solution to grab customers' attention and it has been connected to having a positive effect on audiences' attention (Bryant and Zillmann, 1989, Gulas and Weinberger, 1992). Speck (1987) also put customers' attention to the test in humor contexts and found that indeed advertisements utilizing this tool performed better than other kinds of ads. Humor not only grabs the audience's attention, but for it to be effective as a marketing tool, it needs to be an aid in making the message more accessible to the public. In this regard, Stewart and Furse (1986 cit. in Gulas and Weinberger, 1992:36) found that humor helps in the comprehension of ads. Nonetheless, other studies found opposite results (Cantor and Venus 1980; Gelb and Zinkhan 1986), and due to these discrepancies, it is not possible to say that humor always helps the comprehension of a message.

A recent study conducted by Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk (2020) highlights that posts created utilizing a creative approach and funny texts or images were more appreciated and persuaded the audience to express their opinions in the comment section. Moreover, it also shows how creating a playful perspective and giving useful information about museums' objects is linked to the use of informal education as a palatable form of education.

According to Gulas and Weinberger (1992), humor is connected to source liking. This is very useful in the advertising field, since according to Haley and Baldinger (1991) lit is an important variable in the success of an ad, and it is also one of the best measures to determine the success of a commercial's sales.

Nonetheless, source liking is not the only feature that matters. In this field, source credibility has obtained mixed results. Speck (1987) investigated two aspects of source credibility, 'knowledgeableness' and 'trustworthiness'. He figured that 'knowledgeableness' was not improved with humorous ads, while there were improvements towards 'trustworthiness' using a specific kind of humor, **sentimental humor** (Speck, 1991). Therefore, humor is improbable to enhance feelings of credibility (Weinberger and Gulas, 1992).

Furthermore, research has been made regarding how humor elements relate to message elements. In particular, these elements can be related on three levels, **intentional relatedness** (about the ad's intention), **structural relatedness** (in relation to its structure), **and semantic relatedness** (in relation to its themes). **Intentional relatedness** is the relationship humor has toward message type and message processing, **structural relatedness** refers to the role that humor plays in message-dominant ads and the role of product information in humor-dominant ads, while **semantic relatedness** is represented, for example, by the relationship between humor and product-related themes.

Beyond advertising, humor has been shown to enhance learning environments as seen in the study conducted by Ziv (1988). He investigated the learning outcomes of students divided into two groups, one group would follow a teacher utilizing relevant humor in his lesson and the other not utilize it. According to his findings, the students who learned their materials following teachers using relevant humor obtained a higher score on tests than students who learned from teachers not using humor. The results of his studies show the positive impact of humor in learning contexts, but in particular the use of humor relevant to the subject taught. The teachers of the experiments were indeed trained to use this specific kind of humor and studied aimed examples to show to their classes. The concept of the right 'dose' of humor is important to this discussion, meaning the right amount of humor to use per lesson was also put to the test.

On this note, Gruner (1967) found out that humor increases teachers' likeability in the minds of students. According to Bryan and Zillmann (1989), humor has been proven to positively influence students' liking of educational programs and materials.

In this regard, a key element in humor studies is edutainment, a mixture of education and entertainment, which has been rising these past few years and so have new technologies employed in the cultural sector (Addis, 2005). The integration of new technologies into edutainment intensifies and reshapes the experience by promoting more flexibility and interactivity, while also opening up new opportunities. The use of technologies enables individuals to perceive the message through multiple senses simultaneously, thanks to multimedia technology. Moreover, technology applications can enrich the content without making it unnecessarily complex or difficult to absorb, thereby effectively blending education and entertainment (Kinney, 1995 cit. in Addis, 2005:4).

Humor is not a guarantee for success in communicating a message or trying to persuade the audience (Weinberger and Gulas, 1992). Marketing studies in this context showed mixed results, positive and negative. Among the positive results, Romell and Segedi's study (2022) shows how people, especially young people, look for content containing humor messages on social media. It was discovered that humor is mostly appreciated in young audiences, while with older age humor is less appreciated (Romell and Segedi, 2022, Madden and Weinberger, 1984). Overall, to utilize humor as a social media strategy, it is essential to understand the target audiences and their needs (Romell and Segedi, 2022).

Moreover, it was studied how, when affecting the audience at an emotional level, humor manages to persuade the audience. Scott (1990), conducted a study on this topic, studying the consumers' responses to humorous and non-humorous messages in ads. He found out that people who received humorous ads were influenced to attend the marketed social events more than people who did not receive this kind of material.

The tool of humor as a social media strategy has been investigated by Romell and Segedi (2022), who found that social media is an essential everyday form of communication. Ge and Gretzel (2018) investigated the language used in this context, which is a new social language with emojis, gifs, and stickers.

In crisis communication management utilizing humor lessened negative feedback in social media contexts, since humor triggered users' more positive responses and boosted engagement than non-humorous approaches (Yu et al., 2022). In this study, however, the researchers, through three different studies and approaches, also concluded that humor is beneficial to a brand when a negative situation is defensible. In the case of an indefensible negative situation, humor may harm the consumers' idea of the brand and attitudes toward it.

Humor is employed differently in different countries and cultures. On this topic, a study conducted on advertising in the United States and the United Kingdom proves that in the U.K. there was a greater number of humorous ads than in the U.S. (Weinberger and Spotts, 1989). This is also proved by other studies that investigated the use of humor in American and British commercials, finding that in American radio ads, 31% presented humor (Weinberger et al., 1992) and in British television commercials 36% had humorous messages (Weinberger et al., 1989).

According to Raskin (1985), humor depends on an overlap of two or more scripts which are all compatible with the text that presents the joke. The two overlapping scripts should have opposite elements to produce a humorous effect, with the punch line shifting the audience from the first script to the second script.

The humor theory (Raskin, 1985) was applied to a cross-national context (Alden et al., 1993) and it resulted in all four countries taken into consideration (Germany, Thailand, Korea, and the United States) having a majority of the humor in television ads which contained incongruous contrasts. According to the study result, 60% of the ads in all four countries contained oppositions, leading the researcher to believe that the structure described by Raskin (1985) is present in most television ads that want to express humor and that this cognitive structure is not culture-bound. Moreover, the study, while having the limitation of not showing results in terms of the effectiveness of the ads, also concludes that ads created according to the incongruity of incongruity-resolution principles have the potential to generate humor across different national cultures.

To unite people from different cultures and with different humor tastes a common denominator has been established, which is joking about common

experiences and sharing a common experience of reality (Wilde, 1976; McCullough and Taylor, 1993).

Another study investigating ads in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States was conducted by McCullough and Taylor (1993). Their research is based on the differentiation of humor into five types: puns, aggressive humor, sexual humor, nonsense humor, and warm humor. Their findings reveal that in all of the countries taken into analysis, humor is employed in business-to-business advertising. However, the use of humor is different based on the industry, it is usually more frequently employed in advertising, business, dairy, dental, and toys. The business-to-business ads presented all five types of humor; however, puns were the most utilized type, representing a less risky kind of humor.

Romell and Segedi's study (2022) was based on figuring out the effectiveness of humor as a social media strategy. The humor types presented in the survey were divided into **personal and community-based humor, malicious humor**, **wit and one-liners,** and **self-deprecating humor**. During the interviews, the level of appreciation of the humorous messages was evaluated by the interviewed. When asked whether they appreciated the brand's use of humor on social media, 80.4% of the respondents replied 'yes'. Moreover, 63.7% of respondents expressed their preference for brands that share both serious and funny content, 25.5% preferred brands that were informal and funny, and 10.8% opted for more serious content. Furthermore, in the survey, the question was asked whether every brand could utilize humor according to the interviewees. There were 68% negative responses, and the industries that should be careful in using humor according to respondents are non-profit organizations such as charities, healthcare/medical industries, and pharmaceutical companies.

Amid the factors that could influence the level of appreciation of the humorous content, seven contingencies were expressed to the people interviewed: **prior brand evaluation**, **expectancy**, **authenticity**, **relevancy**, **quality of the joke**, **severity and malintent**, and **relatability and personability** (Romell and Segedi, 2022). **Prior brand evaluation** refers to how a participant assesses a brand before engaging with its content, **expectancy** refers to the consumer's anticipation that humor will be present, based on the context, as well as the nature of the brand, product, or service. **Authenticity** represents the level of truthfulness and transparency in both the brand

and its humorous content, what the brand wants to communicate should align with its overall identity, **relevancy** is about the extent to which the humorous content is meaningfully connected to the brand's message or claims. **Quality of the joke** regards the nature, structure, and execution of the humorous content, **severity and malintent** refer to the potential level of financial, personal, or emotional harm the humor might cause, along with the importance of the intention behind it. Finally, **relatability and personability** refer to how well consumers can connect with the humorous content and consider it accessible and engaging. The conclusion of the study highlights that the use of humor as a social media strategy is positive, the question is when and how to employ it for it to be successful.

The style of communication is an important aspect of social media, it establishes a relationship with the audience and influences the customer's behavior toward the brand (Barcelos and Senecal, 2017). In their research, Barcelos and Senecal (2017) investigated the use of human tone of voice on social media for brands promoting products or services. According to their findings, brands should use a human tone of voice for promotion, if its products or services are mainly hedonic and associated with situations of low involvement and risk. Differently, if a brand's products or services are mainly utilitarian, or if the overall sentiment about the brand on social media is negative, the advantages of using a human voice are minimal. Finally, brands should avoid using a human voice when their products or services are typically linked to situations involving high involvement and risk, it is rather more appropriate to use a corporate voice and maintain a level of distance when interacting with customers.

1.4 The present study

This thesis specifically focuses on the social media platform Instagram. It is a photo-sharing platform, that despite focusing more on visual components, still places importance on the textual aspect of the post. It has been extensively used for marketing purposes, also in the museum context (Dunne, 2019).

Furthermore, Instagram is a rapidly growing social media, especially among young people (Amanatidis et al., 2020). Alongside other digital media, it serves as a communication tool that aids museums in increasing their visibility both physically

and online (Fernandez-Lores et al., 2022). One of Instagram's most defying characteristics, which also enhances its power as a marketing tool, is the possibility for users to share photos of their experience at the museum, thereby helping the museum gain recognition from other users and generating interest in the exhibits (Mandarano, 2019).

As we have seen, humor is a tool that has started to be used in online contexts, it has also adapted to different technologies according to technological advancement (Marakos, 2014). It is also linked to positive effects concerning education in effectively promoting messages and influencing the level of likeness of subjects and teachers (Gruner,1967), in advertising, in audience engagement, and in influencing the purchasing behavior of customers (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). It is also linked to persuasion since it reduces counter-arguing (Fraustino and Ma, 2015).

Through social platforms' influence, such as TikTok, Instagram's static visual component has transitioned towards an increasingly popular video component, demonstrated by the creation of *reels*, another resourceful tool for museum communication. This shift indicates that museums continue to adapt their communication strategies to guarantee accessibility and relevancy in the digital age (Kaiser-Moro, 2022). Additionally, given the latest trends, social media managers in art and museum contexts have been utilizing humor. And, in general, cultural institutions are increasingly adapting to new technologies and social media trends (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk, 2020). This raises questions about how and how quickly museums' online communication will continue to evolve.

This brings us to the research question of this study, namely:

R1: What is the impact of social media on museums' communication strategies?

R2: Do social media managers successfully exploit the affordances of social media to successfully engage the audience?

R3: Are there any differences in communication between local museums and internationally renowned museums?

R4: What role does humor play in museum promotion?

CHAPTER TWO

History and Present of the British Museum and the National Archaeological Museum of Venice

2. The Museums

The two museums taken into consideration for this thesis are the British Museum and the National Archaeological Museum of Venice. The two museums were chosen because of their interesting communication on social media, characterized by the use of humor, auto-irony, and following social and pop culture trends.

As we have already seen in Chapter One, the use of social media for museums enhances a learning experience that is more modern, social, young, and dynamic (Russo et al., 2007). When museums utilize hashtags and direct comments in their social media channels, they boost engagement among users (Weilenmann et al., 2013). Social media are also a helpful tool in the context of cultural tourism, since there, people can find any kind of information about their destination, learn about other people's experiences, and then share their own experiences (Karaca, 2022).

Moreover, museums are considered an important part of cultural tourism institutions since they aim to preserve and help spread cultural heritage (Vassiliadis and Zoe, 2006). Cultural tourism is defined as 'the very nature of travelling' (Mousavi et al., 2016:70), and as a tourism activity that moves people to visit new cities and discover new cultures, heritage and attractions of their destination (UN Tourism General Assembly, 2017, https://www.unwto.org/tourism-and-culture). Museums can then be considered a tourism product since they attract many visitors (ECTARC, 1989 cit. in Mousavi et al. 2016:73; Vassiliadis and Fotiadis, 2006). However, cultural tourism is regarded as more than visiting monuments and sights, but also adapting to a different way of life, and in particular, not only experiencing the past of the destination but also the contemporary life (Mousavi et al., 2016).

In the context of cultural tourism and of this study, it is important to look also at the two cities that host the museum: Venice and London. These cities, although very different, are two highly visited cities that rely on tourism as a big component of their economy, studies have already shown the large impact tourism has on cities' economies (Maitland, 2013). In London, as a global city, tourism is identified as a key

aspect of it and plays a role in the competitiveness of the city (Church and Frost, 2010). Venice is a city that survives on tourism (Staiff, 2006). In general, heritage cities attract many visitors, and in the case of Venice, the economic power of tourism led to the phenomenon of 'overtourism' (Bertocchi and Visentin, 2019).

According to the Chamber of Commerce Venice-Rovigo, Venice hosted 32.180.968 visitors in 2022, and 34.467.968 tourists in 2023, 54.7% percent of the visitors in the Veneto region (https://rb.gy/rogl69).

London was visited by 16.126 million tourists in 2002 and by 20.3 million visitors in 2023, 53% of the overall visitors in the United Kingdom according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2024).

The British Museum was the most popular attraction in the United Kingdom in 2022 with 4.1 million visitors according to the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (https://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=618) and also in 2023, with 5.820.860 visitors according to the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (https://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=423).

The Archaeological Museum of Venice, as part of an integrated route with the museums of Piazza San Marco, was visited by 370.491 tourists in 2022, making it the most visited among the state museums according to the tourism yearbook (https://www.comune.venezia.it/it/content/studi), and by 387.683 tourists in 2023 according to the Directorate-General of Museums (http://musei.beniculturali.it/notizie/notifiche/i-numeri-dei-musei-italiani-nel-2023).

2.1 The British Museum

The British Museum was the first national public museum in the world (https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story). It was founded in 1753 with an Act of Parliament and then re-founded in 2003. It is described as being 'designed to present as complete and integrated a picture as possible of the development of different but related cultures through the ages' (Wilson 1990: 115). His aim emphasizes making the collections available and free to everyone, reflecting the idea that every culture should be known and understood (https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us).

One of the most important figures in the creation of what is known as the British Museum is Sir Hans Sloane. He was a collector with the aim to collect for the benefit of the scholarly world, hiring cataloguers to help him in his task and encouraging the use of his artifacts by others. His collection was wide and reflected an imperial vision, with artifacts coming from Jamaica (Porter, 2001). Most of Sloane's collection consisted of natural history, however, objects made by man were present as well, the artificial productions. Among its collections, the ethnographic one contained items from indigenous populations (Wilson, 2002; https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/sir-hans-sloane).

In the seventeenth century, the concept of 'museums' did not simply relate to a place where objects were stored and exhibited, but also to libraries (Yeo, 2003). This is why at first the workers of the Museums were librarians and books and manuscripts were part of the exhibits (Watson, 2019). The British Museum was also born with the idea to welcome the Cottonian Library, which suffered losses of books and manuscripts during a fire in 1737, rendering it free and accessible to everyone. It was also seen as a chance to obtain the Harleian collection (Baron, 1973).

The Cottonian and the Harleian collections were of great importance, they represented parts of the English national identity, in particular, the Harleian collection contained documents related to English manuscripts, namely Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. The Cottonian collection contained documents regarding the development of England as a state, such as five manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Watson, 2019). Moreover, two copies of the Magna Carta were also present, their importance is linked to the Magna Carta being a representation of English liberties (Turner, 2014). The Magna Carta being exhibited in a public museum was a way for the Parliament to remind everyone of its strains against the Crown. Thus, using the Museum as an archive of the road toward English liberties. Nonetheless, monarchists did not go against the institution but supported it like they supported the role of the Parliament (Dickinson, 2022).

After Sir Hans Sloane's death, the Act of Parliament established the British Museum's aim, according to Sloane's legacy and will, "…towards the satisfying the desire of the curious, as for the improvement, knowledge, and information of all persons" (Wilson, 2002).

Since 1759 the museum was open to the public but only for a restricted group of people. There was a general mistrust, especially in lower-class people's behavior. Before the official opening in January, the rules and regulations for admittance to the museum were made public. It was possible to access the museum by ticket and for free, then the name of the visitor was checked by the Principal Librarian. Many tourists reported the feeling of being overwhelmed, both by the immense collection the museum presented and also by the lack of organization, very different from a scientific collection. An important figure in the museum was that of the Trustees, whose job, according to the Act of Parliament, was to govern the Museum, organizing a Board of Trustees that met regularly to discuss current topics (Wilson, 2002).

In the meantime, national museums were starting to appear abroad (Wilson, 2002). The British Museum began to attract an increasing number of visitors and had to work to maintain people's high expectations and sophisticated taste. The main issue with the museum was the lack of money, with Joseph Planta, the new Principal Librarian, the debate about the charge for entry to the museum started again. In 1801 Banks argued they should be charging the entry since people who did not have a higher education only went to the museum out of small curiosities and distracted the officers working with pointless questions. However, the British Museum being created and supported with public funds made the Trustee uncomfortable with Banks's suggestions. Then, in 1802 Planta stepped up and advised the Trustee to decide not to sell tickets and make them available on the day of admittance. Furthermore, the museum had to close on Monday and Friday afternoons, but the opening hours had to be increased by two hours (Wilson, 2002).

The Trustees were still worried about admission since now one person was allowed to apply for twelve sittings per time. By 1805, the Museum was open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and were allowed a maximum of five groups of people of fifteen every hour. In 1803 for the first time, a description of the British Museum was written by James Malcolm. Inside, it is possible to find regulations about the museum and also regulations regarding the Reading Room. He provided descriptions of paintings, especially portraits and also medals (Wilson, 2002).

The Cracherode Collection represents Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode's collection which he donated to the Museum. His collection consisted of coins and

medals, books, shells and minerals, prints and drawings, and cameos and intaglios. One of the most important acquisitions of the British Museum was Egyptian antiquities in 1801, including the Rosetta Stone. The arrival of the Egyptian sculptures brought the necessity to create a new building to host them. The idea was to create a new gallery where both the Townley collection and the Egyptian sculpture could be stored. This gallery brought much more attention to the Museum and reopened the debate about the Museum's access. Joseph Planta affirmed the necessity to implement opening hours to guarantee everyone access to all the collections. It was open to the public from Mondays to Thursdays, and on Fridays, there were private visits. Visitors had to go through the main entrance and sign their names in a book before taking the tour of the Museum and the new gallery (Wilson, 2002).

During this time, Taylor Combe compiled the museum's first official guide, the *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum*, which was revisited during the following years. From 1810 rules changed again, and the Museum was open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., visitors were now allowed to stay in the rooms on the upper floor and in the gallery for as long as they wished. Planta still pushed for wider access, and in the end, he succeeded (Wilson, 2002).

Richard Payne Knight is another notable collector of the Museum, he owned a museum in his house in London and collected coins, and he left his possessions to the British Museum. The Museum's collections were expanding rapidly, and the building was old and damaged, so renovations were in order. For this reason, Robert Smirke was consulted to establish a plan to expand and renovate the building.

Moreover, Planta successfully managed to involve more visitors in the Museum and provide them with guides to the collections. He also supervised the construction of two buildings and doubled the staff at the Museum, while also acquiring printed books and manuscripts. His successor was Henry Ellis as Principal Librarian (Wilson, 2002).

The Museum had to face several public inquiries, concerning its accessibility, despite being a public institution. It received criticism because of the opening hours and the closing months (August and September). Some people in Parliament also wondered about its utility in helping the art industry. Overall, it was decided that Trustees should be better prepared for their roles, and there should be a keeper for

every department. It was also suggested that the Museum should be open during the summer months from 10 a.m to 7 p.m. Moreover, all objects should be registered and there should be casts made of coins, statues, and bronzes, everything funded by the Parliament (Wilson, 2002).

In 1851, the building designed by Smirke was opened to the public. The basement and ground floor hosted the Department of Printed Books. There was also the Large Room, later replaced by the North Library, and the Arched Room, used for library purposes. The period from 1850 to 1860 was a time of flourishing for the antiquities department. At that time there was a growing interest in medieval antiquities, as a result of the influence of the Church of England. New churches started to be built and furnished. After 1878 Edward Bond, who was the Keeper of Manuscripts, became the new Principal Librarian. During his time, he introduced an educational policy and extended the opening hours of the museum. Edward Thompson succeeded him in 1888 and governed for twenty-one years, during which the staff of the museum underwent many changes (Wilson, 2002).

During the late 19th century, a sense of 'Englishness' started to spread especially with the contribution of the philologists Thorpe and Kemble. The ancient roots of England were explored, and Anglo-Saxon antiquities were excavated in the British Isles. At the end of the century, the museum had managed to become a recognized centre for academic excellence (Wilson, 2002).

In the 20th century, the museum experienced two World Wars. During the first one, the museum could keep its public function until 1916, but after the Trustees were forced to close the galleries. Objects were evacuated for their conservation and then were returned in 1919. The second one found the museum prepared for the war. The collections were organized according to their priority for evacuation, and by the time war was declared the higher-priority pieces were all safe (Wilson, 2002).

After the Second World War, the museum underwent a period of restoration longer than the one experienced during the First World War. It only started to recover in the 1960s and 1970s, since it took many years for the building to be reconstructed after the bomb damages. The department in the worst conditions was the one of Coins and Medals. However, the repair of the staff was important as well, thanks to the Trustee's hard work they were able to get the staff back and improve the pay and

conditions of the workers. At the same time, the Museum underwent great developments, especially in the scientific archaeological section. Another issue of the post-war era was the lack of money and staff members suffered for this reason. However, with the boom in television programs and radio, many staff members took the opportunity to appear in such programs related to art history or archaeology, and they also taught evening classes in universities. Among the various changes the museum underwent at this time, after various discussions, it was decided that the Natural History collection was moved to a new building in South Kensington, leaving more space in the museum for antiquities and ethnography. In this period there were changes also regarding the staff members at the Museum since they grew in number (Wilson, 2002).

One of the earliest examples of the role of the curator is Charles Newton (Wilson, 2002). He managed every purchase and had no subordinates. Thanks to his work in Turkey, he made it possible to broaden the horizon of excavations there, his contributions made him one of the most influential British archaeologists. Furthermore, he was able to obtain antiques from old collections throughout the Mediterranean like no one else would be able to do after him. By the 1970s, an education service was set up, to provide more educational insights thanks to the expertise of teachers and researchers. The role of the Director was more defined, and in his figure, the role of a manager who took care of both curatorial and academic aspects and administrative aspects of the Museum was recognized. The 'British Museum Society' was founded in this period and was helpful for fundraising (Wilson, 2002).

In 1975 a new building, designed by Colin St John Wilson, was built to give more space to the museum. Later, in 2000, the Queen Elizabeth II Great Court was created by architects Foster and Partners. It is an education centre that provided new facilities for the museum, at the centre of which there is the Reading Room (Wilson, 2002; https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/history).

Over the years, the British Museum's collection has grown exponentially, covering two million years of humanity, and still in expansion, thanks to curators still researching and acquiring objects today (https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/history).

The British Museum underwent many changes in these years, in structures, collections, and staff members' organization. Still, its mission has remained the same since its foundation: to provide knowledge to all and understanding of every culture.

2.1.1 British Museum's Social Media

The online presence of the Museum was shaped by various projects. Among these projects, it is worth remembering 'A History of the World', which had an online component that enabled users to download podcasts of the radio programme on BBC and upload an object of their creation to the BBC website, five objects were then nominated by the British Museum for the final object. The British Museum was also invested in another project, the 'Wikipedian-in-residence' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/British_Museum), through which Wikipedia users could interact with the museum's staff and collection in order to create some collaborative works (Pett, 2012).

The British Museum's presence on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) is a way to share stories of the museum's collections, also available on their site as the Collection Online, and new acquisitions with the public, as they state on the official site (https://www.britishmuseum.org/terms-use/social-media-code-conduct). In 2009 the Facebook and Twitter accounts were created, and in 2016 the Instagram and YouTube accounts followed. Lastly, they added a LinkedIn account as well.

On the official site, the British Museum outlined a code of conduct for online users to follow, presenting themselves as an institution that aims to 'encourage storytelling, cross-cultural understanding and inclusive, lively, debate' (https://www.britishmuseum.org/terms-use/social-media-code-conduct). From their message, they encourage people to share their insights and opinions on the platforms but always in a respectful way and following the code of conduct. The main rules for the followers are to protect their privacy, keep the discourse relevant to the posts shared and avoid any kind of hateful or disrespectful comment. Moreover, it is underlined that the museum's page is not a place to self-promote or advertise, and one should not post anything that is not their original creative content. Finally, they share their contact page and FAQ, and all the social platforms where to find them.

Pett (2012) conducted a study on the uses of social media at the British Museum. He noticed how the staff used social media to guarantee digital access to the collections and boost engagement and conversations on topics relevant to the Museum. His investigation is based especially on the Facebook and Twitter pages, where all the museum's activities, excavation discoveries, and scientific research are shared.

Currently, on Instagram, the museum's page counts 2.3 million followers, 3.005 posts and a descriptive bio with links related to the museum's site (https://www.instagram.com/britishmuseum/). As highlighted in a communication study, the British Museum's communication strategy on social media is successful due to their sharing of interesting and up-to-date content and interacting with their audience (Mahony et al., 2014).

2.2 The National Archaeological Museum of Venice

The National Archaeological Museum of Venice was established thanks to Domenico Grimani's donations, sculptures and portraits that he collected in Rome and that represented his strong bond to his homeland. It was established as heir to the Public Statuary of the *Serenissima*, a sixteenth-century museum collection, which was placed at the entrance antechamber to the Library of San Marco (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

Located in the Marciana area, in front of Piazza San Marco, the museum is part of a group of buildings consisting of the Archaeological Museum, the Correr Museum, and the Marciana National Library. The ticket also includes access to Palazzo Ducale (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/missione-e-statuto/).

Cardinal Domenico Grimani donated a group of ancient sculptures to the Republic of Venice, a part of his collection was in Rome. Domenico always felt a strong connection to his country, especially after his father Antonio became Venice's *doge*. His nephew, Giovanni Grimani, is also fundamental in this discourse. He was a man of art and humanistic knowledge and donated a collection that consisted of a group of sculptures from Rome, Greece and Aquileia. At the time this group represented great taste in art, exclusivity and a reason to be admired in the field of European collecting (Anti, 1930; Favaretto et al., 2004).

Giovanni Grimani expressed how his collection represented a memory of the past and for this reason, decided to donate it to the Republic of Venice. To give justice to the immense worth of the collection, it was at first placed in the antechamber of the Marciana Library (Favaretto et al., 2004).

On August 19th, 1956, after all the works were finished, the museum opened as one of the first public museums in Europe, and whose antiques were deeply admired by tourists from all over the world. The marbles remained in a state of glorious admiration until the nineteenth century, when they began to suffer from the fall of the Republic, and they were hastily moved to Palazzo Ducale. In the meantime, some donations were made to the collection. One of the most important pieces was the donation made by Giovanni Mocenigo, a Nike statue and the head of Athens. The high number of sculptures and the work implied in preserving them made it necessary to establish the role of the guardian of the Statuary, other than the one of the librarians, who had the role of noting down any change in the sculpture room (Favaretto et al., 2004).

In 1683, Pietro Morosini as senator decided to leave his collections of 3400 pieces of coins and medals to the Republic of Venice, and they ended up being conserved in the Doge's Palace. The catalogue of these items, 'Treasure of Ancient and modern coins' was commissioned by the French scholar Charles Patin (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

From 1737 to 1778 the keeper of the Marciana Library was condensed in the figure of Anton Maria Zanetti. He also was put in charge of supervising the first catalogue of the sculptures in the museum, composed of three volumes and detailed descriptions of the items with drawings of them. It would also later function as a guide to the Museum (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

Moreover, in 1795 Girolamo Zulian, one of the last Ambassadors of the Republic, left to the museum all his heritage consisting of 200 pieces of marbles, ancient vases, bronzes, examples of Egyptian art and gems. With the subsequent fall of the Republic, all the statues were moved to Ducale Palace and were randomly arranged through the rooms (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

In 1811 the decision was made to relocate the library and museum at the 'ex-Doge's Palace', the marbles and inscriptions were collocated in the largest rooms of the Palace. Then, in 1816 Girolamo Ascanio Molin donated to the museum some original Greek pieces. Over time, the statues were placed following specific criteria, and this attracted a higher number of visitors, who ended up donating more pieces to the museum. Among these donations, there were Egyptian pieces such as two mummies brought by Salvatore Arbib in 1899 (Favaretto et al., 2004).

In 1825 Pietro Bettio suggested that the marbles were to be relocated in the previous doge's apartments. The works for the adaptations were completed in 1846 (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

The first official printed catalogue was published in 1865 by Giuseppe Valentinelli. That same year, the Royal Decree was established declaring the separation of the library from the museum. In 1895 Adolfo Venturi and Lucio Mariani tried to reorganize the museum, but they were not successful due to structural issues. In 1909 the first scientific display of the museum was designed, exhibiting sculptures according to chronology and style and dividing them into two categories, 'classical' and 'medieval and modern (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

Furthermore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the museum was moved to the East wing of the Ducale Palace. During War World I, all the possessions were moved to Florence and were brought back to Venice between 1919 and 1920. Eventually, the museum was placed in the *Procuratie Nuove's* rooms near the Marciana Library, better suited to welcome such pieces. The statues were arranged following the University of Padua's archaeological professor Carlo Anti's guidelines, organizing the statues by artistic movement and period, representing the evolution of Greek and Roman sculptures in the 5th century BC and the 3rd century AD (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

Regarding the *Procuratie Nuove*, they have a historical significance. Their constructions started in the fifteenth century, as houses of the *procuratori* of Saint Mark until the fall of the Republic in 1797. Then starting in 1807, the entire building was converted into the Royal Place of Venice (Favaretto et al., 2004). This urban renewal project was commissioned by the doge Andrea Gritti in the sixteenth century.

Today, one of the apartments hosts the Archaeological Museum. Since 1962, the museum has been located in the southern part of St. Mark Square in the *Procuratie Nuove* (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

In 1939 a loan of antiques was made to the Correr Museum with some pieces placed in some rooms on the mezzanine floors of the National Museum (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

After War World II the museum needed some renovations, the works lasted until 1952, and the museum also saw an addition of four rooms. In 1953 a new guide to the museum's collection was prepared by Bruna Forlati Tamaro (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

In 1978 the museum had to close due to deteriorating conditions and it only reopened in 1983. Michele Tombaloni, who had been the director since 1976, oversaw the cataloguing of Greek artifacts, such as coins, and ceramics, and Roman glass (Favaretto et al., 2004).

In 1982, a large group of proto-historic bronzes to the museum by Giancarlo Ligabue. Starting from 1992 the director of the museum was Giovanna Luisa Ravagnan, an accomplished archaeologist, until 2002. She created the first room cards and an educational section in the museum. In 1997, the museum organized an exhibition in collaboration with the Marciana National Library and started to host temporary exhibitions. By 1999, the museum took part in the initiative of the single ticket for the System of St. Mark Square Museums (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

One of the biggest collections of the Museum includes Greek marbles from the Classical and Hellenistic periods, most of which were part of the Grimani collection. Their presence represents the role Venice used to have in cultural and commercial exchanges in the Mediterranean. Thanks to Adolf Furtwanglerä, more in-depth studies were conducted to put an exact time collocation on the Greek marbles (Favaretto et al., 2004).

The museum also houses Roman copies of Greek models of the Classical and Hellenistic ages. Their importance is linked to showing the replication Romans usually made based on Greek original sculptures. During the Imperial age, the Cesari production of copies continued in regard to buildings such as theatres and libraries.

The objects of this collection are also incredibly valuable as many Greek originals were often destroyed and damaged to obtain their materials. Another part of the Museum consists of reliefs, mostly from the Grimani's collection. Some of them are linked to funerary rituals, while others document the religion and the most important gods for the Greeks. They represent a testimony of the heritage and historical significance of the museum. Portraits, also from the Grimani collection, are also present in the museum, and they were especially appreciated by collectors of the time and represented a print of events, history, and characters that played a part in it. Venetian collectors often did not own all the pieces of a collection of portraits, but only focused on specific characters, such as Adriano or Caracalla (Favaretto et al., 2004, Anti, 1930).

It is possible to find portraits with different characteristics, that is because portraits were created due to different styles, namely private portraits which were more focused on individual characteristics, and public portraits which were more idealized in their creation. There were also different types of circumstances for which they were commissioned, honorary, funerary, or votive. Furthermore, Roman emperors used to utilize portraits to construct a specific image for their political propaganda purposes. In the Museum it is also possible to find portraits in the classical style, since they are created by following the examples of the classics as a way to imitate the old art and get closer to the classical spirit. One of these techniques was restoration, involving completion works as a way to exercise their profession (Favaretto et al., 2004).

In addition to sculptures, the museum hosts a collection of Greek and Roman. During the *Serenissima* Republic, inscriptions were part of the Venetian antique collecting. In 1882, after a restoration intervention at St. Mark's Basilica, the *stele* with the treaty of the cities of Lato and Olus was discovered. In 1850, during some construction works in a palace near Rialto was retrieved the *stele* with the treaty of Gortyna and Hierapytna with Priansos. With the end of the Republic, the interest in ancient objects decreased significantly, while the interest in everything related to the city of Venice increased. The museum's gems collection represents just a small portion of the items collected in the museum. The most important collection is the one belonging to house Grimani. They are categorized into cameos or engraved gems, and they can be worked either by hand or with a *burin*. The numismatic collection consists

of 9.000 pieces from Greeks, Romans, Venetians, Byzantines and Ostrogoths. Pietro Morosini, at the time of his death in 1683, left 3.400 pieces of gold, silver and bronze. It is recognized as the most impressive medal donation to the *Serenissima* Republic. And it led to the compilation of a catalogue of the collection by Charle Patin. In part thanks to this donation, the medal collection of the museum is known worldwide. The bronze collection of the museum consists of objects of different productions and periods, namely artifacts from Middle and Late Bronze Age and Byzantine works of art. The ceramic collection covers the period from the IX century to the III century B.C. Girolamo Zulian made the first donations whose collection consisted of more than one hundred ceramic vases. Other collections then were added to this one, among which is the Girolamo Ascanio Molin collection, with vases of the Roman Age (Favaretto et al., Anti, 1930).

Overall, the Venice Archaeological Museum represents the history of Venice and its relationship with the ancient world. The Roman and medieval finds from the mainland settlements contribute to reconstructing the multi-millennial history of population, the development of culture and art in the Veneto area, and its interaction with the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean world (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/en/our-history/).

2.2.1 National Archaeological Museum of Venice Social Media

The Facebook and Twitter accounts of the National Archaeological Museum of Venice date back to 2012 as the first social media platforms of the museum, while Instagram followed in 2017. In the social media policy section of the official website (https://archeologicovenezia.cultura.gov.it/), it is explained that the social media channels of the National Archaeological Museum of Venice aim to promote the museum's cultural heritage and activities. They also seek to promote engagement through communication, listening, inviting participation, and encouraging dialogue and feedback. They describe their online space as 'democratic' and 'open', where everyone can respectfully express their opinions. There is an explicit no-tolerance policy towards any kind of spread of sexual content, comments that violate the Privacy Law, comments not pertinent to the topic of the post, or spam.

Recently, the social media communication of the museum was noticed by locals and by television and newspapers. The social media managers of the museum, Ilaria Fidone and Luca Trolese, were also interviewed and asked about their communication strategies. According to this interview (https://rb.gy/5q6pg1), the social media managers express how important it is for them that art is accessible to everyone, not only archaeology enthusiasts, and social media spaces are the perfect place to interact with everyone. They started to utilize a more 'pop' and funny language to get closer to locals, since they received mostly foreign tourists' visits, and especially, by being placed in the *Procuratie Nuove* palace with the Correr Museum and the Marciana Library, they felt like they did not have a clear identity. They always have an educational aim in mind in their posts, where they incorporate memes, rubrics, hashtags and calls to action to attract and engage their audience.

Currently, the Instagram page of the museums has 48.400 followers, presents 2.356 posts, and a descriptive bio with stories organized into highlights sections (https://www.instagram.com/museo_archeologico_venezia/).

Furthermore in 2019, the Digital Innovation Observatory in Cultural Heritage and Activities of the Politecnico of Milan, in a study investigating the performances of museums in Italy, awarded the Archaeological Museum as having one of the major growth on Facebook and Instagram channels in 2019, along with the Borghese Gallery and the Estensi Galleries (https://rb.gy/lz48em).

(https://rb.gy/lz48em).
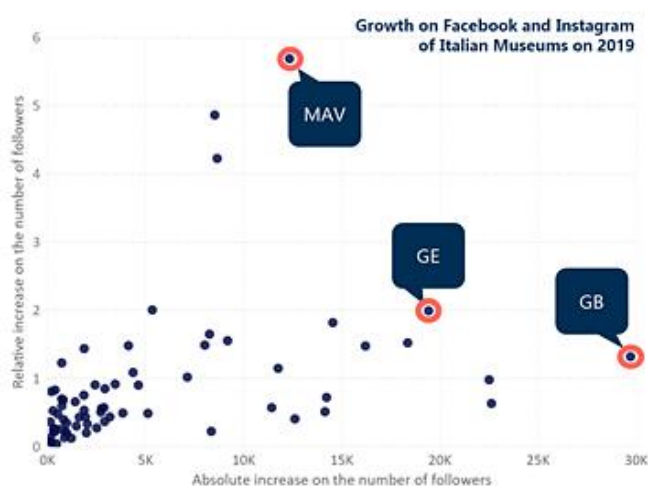
CHAPTER THREE

Data and Methodology

3. Introduction to the Analysis

For the present study, the Instagram pages of two museums were analysed: the British Museum's page (https://www.instagram.com/britishmuseum/), and the National Archaeological Museum of Venice's page (https://www.instagram.com/museo_archeologico_venezia/). Both museums are also present on Facebook and Twitter, however, their Instagram pages have more followers than the other social media.

The Instagram pages were chosen because each profile focuses on their museums, and frequently publishes new content (currently the British Museum has published 3006 and the Archaeological Museum of Venice has published 2367). Their content is based on the collections in their museum and in spreading accurate information in order for knowledge about art and archeology to be available to everyone. Moreover, both pages showed strong identities through their communication and promoted content related to contemporary events and social trends. For the study, an Italian museum and an English museum were chosen to make a systematic study by comparing two museums of different sizes, the British Museum, one of the most known and visited museums, and the Archaeological Museum, a state museum that is connected to two other well-known museums in Venice (The Marciana Library and the Correr Museum) and if there were variations in communication. Furthermore, the British Museum does not seem to need more publicity, while the Archaeological Museum expressed the desire to attract more locals through their social media communication. The study wants to compare how different museums from different countries and therefore languages are facing the role of Social Media Managers and keeping up with social trends to entertain and attract users. The National Archaeological Museum of Venice's use of humor in its posts was noticed by locals and therefore succeeded in its mission's strategy, as seen in Chapter Two.

Regarding the data, it was collected by taking screenshots of Instagram posts of the two accounts of the year 2023, the main focus, for which visitors' data is also available. Posts from January, February, and March 2024 were also considered, as they show the museums' continuous use of humor and trends and investigate the evolution of their communication strategies. The posts were chosen according to their tone and style, noticing which had used more emojis, used humorous elements, and had a playful and catchy caption.

A critical discourse analysis was applied to the captions of the posts on Instagram. The theoretical framework adopted for the verbal analysis is Gee's (2014) toolkit. For each of the tools selected were analaysed two examples from each museum. In particular, among the selected posts in the years 2023-2024, the average of likes was calculated and then the posts were divided between below average or above average, in order to investigate different levels of audience engagement. The British Museum, according to Instagram analytics has an average of likes of 7.996, while the Archaeological Museum of Venice has an average of likes of 160. The tools selected for this study are five, and they are further described in this chapter. Therefore, in total, the analysis was based on 20 examples. It is worth mentioning that in the social media context, the number of likes and engagement of posts is influenced by the time of posting, the algorithm, and other aspects. However, this criterion was decided to possibly find some similarities between the posts that received more likes and to understand the type of post more attractive to users.

It is important to conduct a critical discourse analysis to understand what kind of image and brand identity the two Instagram pages want to build for the museums, which kind of following they want to attract, and the type of relationship they want to establish with their audience. Moreover, for the analysis, images are considered companions to the text to reinforce and further explain the message expressed by Instagram's posts.

3.1 Definitions of Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (2003) considers discourse as an element of social practice in three ways: genres, discourses, and styles. Genres are connected to the way of acting, which can be accomplished through speaking or writing, while discourse is a way of representing

different areas of the world from various perspectives and positions. Styles are ways of being, so social or personal identities. Foucault (1972) focused on discourse seen as being constitutive, namely discourse is viewed as constructing society in different dimensions, and on the interdependency of discourse procedures of society. Moreover, in what is known as his 'archaeological studies' he views discourse analysis as an investigation of statements and studying rules of discourse that make it possible for one statement to be placed in a specific period and setting, and not for another. Then, in his 'geology studies' he introduced the concept of power and language, and discourse are viewed as fundamental in society, which shapes and controls discourse, and social processes (Fairclough, 1992).

Foucault (1994) made another distinction in terms of meaning: representation, which is linked to knowledge, and action regards the relationship with others, and identification, which regards the relationship with the self and issues of morality. All these aspects are not separated but directly connected to each other. Usually, the relationship between a discourse and a social event is mediated by someone or something (Fairclough, 2003).

Moreover, Fairclough (2004) makes a distinction between external and internal relations in texts. External relations are relations between the text and elements from society (Actions, Identification and Representation). The analysis of internal relations consists of semantic relations, grammatical relations, vocabulary relations, and phonological relations. In addition to these, another relation is the one between the text and an external text, called 'intertextuality'.

Gee (2014) spoke about two different types of discourse, the 'big D Discourse and the 'small d discourse', which represent language in use. The Discourse is characterized by distinguished ways of approaching language, by writing, listening, writing, and reading. These are first combined with ways of acting, interacting, feeling, thinking, and believing, and then all of these are combined and put in coordination with people and objects to form an identity that is socially recognized.

Context also plays an important role when studying discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983). Hymes (1964) distinguishes between three kinds of people when a speech is taking place: the addresser, which is the person that initiates the communication, the addressee namely the person the communication is directed to, and the audience,

people that overhear the speech. He then proceeds to describe other features, such as the channel, the way in which the communication is taking place, and the setting, represented by the physical space but also by gestures and facial expressions. The code is the language that is being used to communicate, the event consists of the nature of the communication, and the message form is the form chosen for the act of communication. Then, he also added the element of the key, which is the evaluation of the act, and the purpose, namely what are the expected outcomes of the communication.

Critical discourse analysis is an element of discourse analysis, and it is based on the relationship between the discourse and social elements, and it is based on the principle that language is not only talking about things but also doing them (Fairclough, 2001; Brown and Yule, 1985).

Conducting a discourse analysis means investigating language in use, the meanings that are given to language, and the actions related to it (Gee and Handford, 2012). It deals with language born out of a specific need to communicate something with the aim to interact and act (He, 2017). Moreover, it is defined as a study of how sentences are intertwined together to produce meaning and coherence (Gee and Handford, 2012). The purpose of investigating a text utilizing discourse analysis is to uncover the aim and of the author of the written text or speech (Gee, 2014). Regarding the production of written and oral language, there are obvious differences. In oral language, the speaker can utilize gestures, change his tone, put emphasis on words while speaking, and use his expressions. Instead, writers do not have these kinds of tools at their disposal, however, they can choose to take breaks in their writing, look for the right word, and rewrite or change their mind about something they wrote (Brown and Yule, 1983). Among the differences between oral texts and written texts, oral texts are usually less syntactically structured than written texts and may change some expressions while speaking, in written language there are usually meta-lingual markers between clauses and usually follow the form of the subject followed by the predicate (Brown and Yule, 1983). Fairclough (2001) identified three stages of discourse analysis, namely description, which focuses on formal properties of the text, interpretation which is based on the relations between the text and interaction, and explanation which is centered on the relationship between interaction and social

context. In turn, interpretation has four distinct phases. First, the surface of the utterance during which interpreters are able to capture words and sentences, the meaning of the utterance, which brings a first meaning to the words and sentences. Then, local coherence is the phase in which interpreters are able to grasp meanings between sentences, finding some coherence in the text. The last phase is text structure and point, which finally brings full coherence to the text (Fairclough, 2001). In general, there are multiple ways to conduct a discourse analysis, based on different theories and with different approaches, but with the common idea of viewing language as an integral part of the construction of society (Gill, 2000).

3.2 Gee's Toolkit

Gee (2014) claims that every theory needs a set of tools to analysing the language, and has therefore composed a toolkit, consisting of 28 tools applicable both to speech and writing, through which analyze different types of texts. Each tool is useful to analyse language in use with definitions, questions to ask when analysing the texts, examples, and problems that may surface.

While analysing the text, the analyst should look for details hidden in the text that seem 'relevant' to the context of the text and to the investigation that is being conducted (Gee, 2014). Moreover, Gee divided his book into four units: the **Language and Context Unit**, the **Saying, Doing, and Designing Unit**, the **Building Thing in the World Unit**, and the **Theoretical Tools**.

In the **Language and Context Unit**, Gee explains the importance of context in language use. There is always a setting in which a speech or written text is presented, and usually, some things are left unsaid because the speaker takes for granted to be speaking with people who share his cultural background. In this regard, Gee introduces the first tool, **deixis**, which are words whose use is influenced by the context. A speaker uses deixis in an implied context and the audience has to figure out the meaning based on the context. The **Deixis Tool** is useful to investigate what the audience knows before and after the speech and how Deixis is being employed in the given context. The second tool is the **Fill InTool** which can be used to what needs to be filled in given the context of what is said in the text, and what is taken for granted that the audience

should know to understand the message of the text. Also, the **Making Strange Tool** is a useful tool regarding the context of a discourse, which should be investigated by asking what seems strange and does not fit in it, assuming that the person reading or listening does not share the same cultural knowledge as the speaker or writer. The fourth tool is the **Subject Tool** which consists of investigating why a specific topic was chosen and its relation to the subject, and also how the sentence is structured to give importance to the subject and other parts of the speech and why. Then, there is the **Intonation Tool**, which regards asking questions about the intonation of the speaker and how it influences the audience in understanding the meaning that wants to be transmitted. Finally, the **Frame Tool** is the last tool of this unit. It should be utilized at the end of the discourse analysis to look for more information that could have been overlooked and consider if it can change the analysis.

The **Saying, Doing, and Designing Unit** is composed of seven tools. The first one is the **Doing and Not Just Saying Tool** regards investigates the purpose of the speech, by analysing what the speaker is trying to do other than what he or she is trying to say. Usually, in a speech, there is more than one action and more than one purpose the speaker is conveying. In this unit, Gee (2014) also compares language to building objects, specifying that the choice of certain phrases instead of others is fundamental to letting the audience know the meaning of the discourse. The second tool described is the **Vocabulary Tool**, which summarizes that in a text one should look for which kind of words are being used, if they are of German origin or Latin origin, and whether the distribution of words gives insight into the style and register of the text. Then there is the **Why This Way and Not That Way Tool**, useful for reflecting on the reason behind the choices the author made in using grammar in the way he or she did and not in another way and also the way he or she decided to structure the discourse. The **Integration Tool** focuses on which kinds of information were excluded, which were included in the discourse, and which perspective is being utilized by the way the clauses are organized. The **Topic and Theme Tool** focuses on the theme of each clause and of the whole sentence, reflection on the reason for which those choices were made, and if the theme reflects the subject of the sentence. The **Stanza Tool** is also described, it consists in looking for stanzas in text and observing how they are grouped up.

The third Unit is called the **Building Thins in the World Unit**, and it is made up of eight tools. The first one is the **Context is Reflexive Tool**, in which the environment of the discourse comes up again. With this tool, the analysts should ask themselves how the writer or speaker is creating the context in which the audience will be placed, and what he or she is saying to give shape to this context. And, also, if what the author of the text is saying changes something in similar contexts. The **Significance Building Tool** is based on studying the way the grammar and words are being utilized to give more or less importance to some part of the texts, for example, the difference in importance of information put in main clauses and in subordinate clauses. The **Activities Building Tool** should be put to use to investigate what activities are being set up and expected to be fulfilled through communication. An action differs from an activity in the sense that the action is something that is being done, while an activity is the way an action performs a specific social behavior. The **Identities Building Tool** refers to the role everyone has in society or their community, through this tool the aim is to acknowledge the role the writer or speaker wants to embody and wants the public to recognize in him or her. The **Relationship Building Tool** is focused on the analysis of the bond created through language between the author of the text and its audience, or social groups, institutions, or other people. The **Politics Building Tool** should be used by studying how grammar and words are employed to create a social good and either transmit it or not to other people. The **Connections Building Tool** is based on the concept that through language it is possible to create relevance between things, therefore this tool is used to analyse how words and grammar connect or disconnect things in the world. Then, there is the **Cohesion Tool**. When the need arises to make a text or speech more well-connected to tie sentences together, cohesive devices are usually employed. With this tool, it is possible to work out how cohesion works in a specific text how it ties together pieces of information, and whether it succeeds or fails in connecting pieces of information. The **Systems and Knowledge Building Tool** is connected to the **Politics Tool** and it is about building up or building down specific sign systems. The **Topic Flow or Topic Chaining Tool** is needed in investigating the topics present in all the clauses and how all these together influence the general topic and coherence of the speech or text.

Lastly, the **Theoretical Tools** are presented, they are based on different core ideas related to the relationship between language and culture. The **Situated Meaning Tool** is connected to the Fill In Tool, it aims to observe the situated meaning of the context and how it is constructed. The **Social Languages Tool** is a tool useful when studying the grammatical structures and words through which it is possible to deduct a social language, it is possible that more social languages are linked together or that there is a switch between them in the text. The **Intertextuality Tool** can be applied when a text references another text in some way or style of language. The **Figured World Tool** is about what type of worlds is the author of the text trying to create through language, and in a study, one should ask what is present in these figured worlds. With the Big D Discourse Tool the investigation centers around the use of language of a person and also the activities which can be connected to a specific cultural identity. One should ask which Discourse is the language part of and what identity is the speaker trying to get acknowledged by expressing certain beliefs, actions, or environments. Finally, the **Big C Conversation Tool** asks what debated, sides, and claims the audience should know according to the speaker or writer and whether the communication in this case can face a historical debate or debates between Discourses and which types.

3.3 Methodology in the Present Study

Digital media represent a mixture of written texts and oral texts (Gee and Hayes, 2011). Moreover, they have the ability to strengthen the power of written and spoken language. Thanks to these platforms, people have the possibility to always be updated and interact with people far away from them, shortening distances (Constant et al. 1996; Haythornthwaite 2002). Social media have the unique power to give people the possibility to post their thoughts and then dialogue with someone else about common topics, similar to what happens when talking in real life (Gee and Hayes, 2011). Usually, texts on social media present emojis, symbols, or photography other than words (Gee and Hayes, 2011).

For this study, Gee's toolkit was considered, and in particular, four tools were chosen to conduct the discourse analysis and will be explained in more detail, they are:

The **Fill In Tool**, is a helpful tool when the context of the speech or written text has to be exanimated. Working with this tool means asking what parts of the text should be filled in in order for the audience to understand the message of the text. For the analysis, the tool was used to determine which kind of information was implied in the Instagram caption, to understand the target audience the museum is speaking to in promoting exhibitions, sharing artistic and historical facts, and considering their main community in terms of age, uses of other social media, knowledge of the internet culture and nationality. In sum, it is useful to understand the context the page is setting for the audience and the type of audience that is expected to understand the humor and social trends.

The **Intertextuality Tool** is put to use when someone talking about a topic alludes to something someone else has said or when a text references another text. The term 'text' also includes movies, video games, and television. There is more than one type of intertextuality, when a text directly or indirectly references another text, or when words are taken from a source, and to everyone who understands the reference the meaning is clear. Another type of intertextuality happens when a text uses the style of a language associated with an identity different from that of the original text's style. And also, when a text imitates the phrases or grammar of another text. Using this tool, one should ask the way in which words and grammatical structure are presented and used to refer to other texts or styles of language. In this case, it was important to find which kind of references were used by the museums, whether it was movies, myths, or trends of the moment. The tool was selected to investigate how museums want to use other pieces of literature to attract users and insert their contents in larger discussions.

The **Identities Building Tool** is connected to the idea that when people use language, they assume an identity related to it. People assuming a specific role will be expected to speak and act in a certain way by their community. In this context, the concept of a 'core identity' (Gee, 2014:112) is introduced, as a sense of self that embodies all the identities people assume in different circumstances. For this study, posts were selected to study which type of identity the museums wished to express to their audience, whether being a sure source of information, a fun and informal space to share one's thoughts, or the trendy Instagram page to look for adaptation of new

internet trends. Overall, the tool was chosen to anlyse how the museum wants to position itself on social media (humorous, approachable, educational) and how it wants to shape its identity and the identity of its audience.

The **Significance Building Tool** how words and grammar used in a text help in building a certain meaning, by building up words or vice versa. Language is always utilized to give or take away importance to things. Usually, words and grammar are chosen to give a contribution to building tasks. In this analysis, the tool helps investigate what is considered important in the posts' messages, whether it is the story of a famous character, a festivity, or an event that is being promoted, it is fundamental to look at how sentences are structured if words are highlighted in some way, if hashtags and emojis are used and how. This Tool is an aid in understanding the importance of specific cultural elements, events, or themes. It is necessary when analysing the effect of humor and wordplay on the significance of the museums' artifacts.

The **Connections Building Tool** is connected to the Fill In Tool, since, as we have seen, the speaker or writer often leaves collections implicit and expects the audience to render them explicit. Other than observing how things are connected or disconnected, it is also important to note how language is used to make things relevant or irrelevant to other things. In this case, it is interesting to notice the connections Instagram posts make between the museums, the collections, and the audience. For example, if there are connections between the ancient world and the contemporary world, creating connections between works of art and artifacts and objects of the present time. The Connections Building Tool helps explore the impact of cultural reference and humor on audiences, such as promoting exhibitions or activities or encouraging interactions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Critical Discourse Analysis on Social Media Communication

4. Introduction to the Analysis

This chapter focuses on the analysis of selected Instagram posts from the pages of the British Museum and the Archaeological Museum of Venice. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, critical discourse analysis was applied and specific tools from Gee's toolkit (2014) were considered. Regarding, the posts published by the Archaeological Museum of Venice, the English translation of Italian sentences is provided inside the footnotes.

4.1 The Fill-in Tool

Social media are environments in which there is a specific type of language and terminologies in use, deeply related to internet culture and influenced by new trends promoted by various social platforms, such as TikTok (Ge and Gretzel, 2018). Without information about this kind of context, it may be difficult for people who do not use social platforms to understand terminologies and the meaning of the message the speaker wants to convey. An example of a sentence that needs to be understood through internet culture context is the following:

'Thinking about the Roman Empire'? Us too!'

The post in question (images 1-2), from the British Museum's Instagram page, opens up with this question. Then, it proceeds to promote a new exhibition using the hashtag '#LegionExhibition', followed by reviews of renowned newspapers, and to invite the audience to buy tickets. The picture (Image 2) shows what the exhibition looks like. The question opening the post is referencing a famous trend that was born on TikTok about women asking men how often they think about the Roman Empire, the usual answer being 'daily' (https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/how-often-think-about-roman-empire/). The trend went viral among users and spread also outside the TikTok app. In order to understand what the post wants to say it is important to understand the context. Without knowing the trend, the question makes sense semantically, but the

essence of the joke and the humorous tone of the caption are lost. The British Museum assumes that its target audience is familiar with this particular trend and with internet culture in general. With this post, the social media managers show how the target audience for this post, and the page in general, is relatively young. As was explained in Chapter 1, humor is more appreciated and searched in social media contexts among young people (Romell and Segedi, 2022). Moreover, the TikTok app is mostly used among people of age, in particular, 34.8% of users are between the ages of 18 and 24, and 34% are between the ages of 25 and 34 (https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/tiktok-age-demographics). This kind of humor is 'community-based humor' (Romell and Segedi, 2022) since it requires knowledge or understanding of the internet culture which is the context of the post. It can also be classified as comic wit, based on the incongruity-resolution of exaggeratively thinking about the Roman Empire every day and then making the connection that the phrase referenced the internet trend. The post aims to share knowledge about the history of the Roman Empire while promoting a new exhibition at the museum and wants to persuade its audience to learn about it also by employing a recent and relevant social trend.
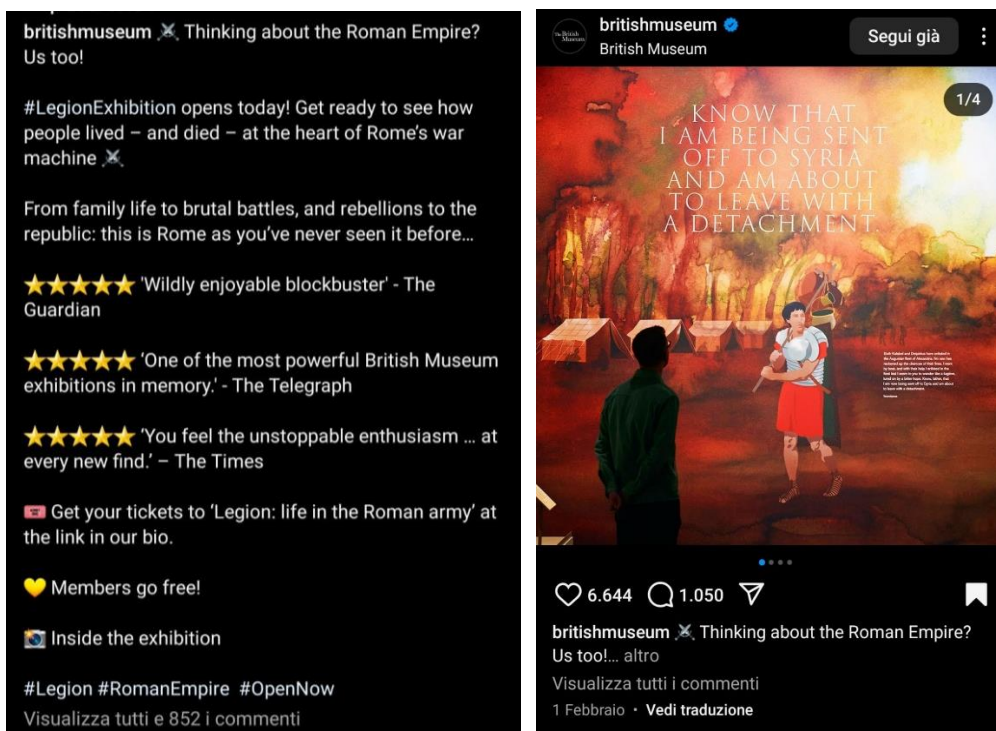
Images 1-2. *Screenshots from the British Museum's Instagram page*

In another post, the British Museum shared the following:

'Everyone is talking about the #Superbowl today, so here's a superb owl from the collection!'

In this case, the humor of the post relies on the knowledge of the public of the Super Bowl, a football league championship event that takes place in America. The target audience is supposed to be familiar with this term, which refers to a well-known sports event even outside the United States. The phrase creates a pun and relies on wordplay, shaped by the words 'superb' and 'owl' which phonetically sound similar to 'Super Bowl'. However, this term is also an internet meme, born out of people incorrectly writing the word 'Super Bowl'. This creates a second layer of meaning that may not be clear to anyone, since this typo goes back to a Twitter post of 2008. Since then the term has been used in a late-night TV program and the TV show 'What We Do in Shadows'. Regarding the world of social networks, the term was used on the National Geographic Twitter page in 2019 as an opportunity to use the meme to actually talk about owls (https://www.salon.com/2023/02/12/superb-owl-sunday/). According to humor processes, it can be classified as an incongruity-resolution type of humor, given that the reader may be surprised when reading 'Superb Owl', but when processing the connection to the internet culture it should elicit a humorous response. Also in this case, the pun heavily relies on internet culture, since without the knowledge of the meme it would lose its intended humor, and is linked to 'community-based humor'(Romell and Segedi, 2022), relying on the shared knowledge among users. Moreover, the British Museum took this chance to promote a painting belonging to one of its collections (image 3).

Image 3. *Screenshots from the British Museum's Instagram page*

Another post, from the Archaeological Museum of Venice, opens up as follows:

'#ommioddio siamo invasi dal #GranchioBlu

Se il crostaceo più social del momento ti genera ansia perché pensi che le "moeche"[1] non saranno più le stesse, vieni a visitare il Museo Archeologico.

Noi avevamo previsto tutto! Poteva infatti mancare nelle nostre collezioni il decapode che fa tendenza?

Amici subbacqui, eccolo servito!'[2]

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[1] Moeche are a traditional Venetian dish

[2] English translation: #ohmygod we are being invaded by the #BlueCrab
If the most social crustacean of the moment generates anxiety for you because you think 'moeche' will never be the same again, come and visit the Archaeological Museum.
We had it all planned! Could the trend-setting decapod be missing from our collections?
Subaqueous friends, here it is!'

'E chi ci regala la ricetta più succulenta e gourmet vince una visita guidata!'[3]

In the post, the subject is blue crabs. The context of the description is considered to be well-known by the audience and is therefore referring to Italian users especially locals (Venetian people) are informed about the Blue Crab issue on the Venetian coast due to its invasive nature and ecological impact, and Venetian cuisine culture ('moeche') are referenced in the post. This can therefore be classified as 'community-based humor' (Romell and Segedi, 2022), since someone else outside the context might find it difficult to understand the message of the post. By employing comic wit, crabs are described as the most 'social' crustaceans of the moment, referencing their heavy presence on the news and their popularity in Italy and thus speaking again mostly to an Italian and Venetian audience. The last sentence 'eccolo servito' is also a use of comic wit, since it humorously refers to the blue crab being a new dish of interest for chefs in Venice (https://www.lavocedivenezia.it/la-laguna-di-venezia-che-cambia-il-granchio-blu-comincia-ad-apparire-sui-menu-di-grandi-chef/). They strategically use this content by inviting the audience to go check out the carving representing the blue crab, humorously suggesting that they predicted everything by conserving the artifact (image 5). Also, when saying that such piece ('decapode che fa tendenza') could not be missed from their collections, they promote their museum experience as interesting and complete. At last, the museum invites the audience to share their recipe, and the best one would win a guided tour at the museum, humorously creating a participatory experience for the audience and fostering a sense of community.

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[3] English translation: 'And whoever gives us the most succulent, gourmet recipe wins a guided tour!'

Images 4-5. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

Another example from the Archaeological Museum:

'POV: Sei Alcmena e hai scoperto di essere stata ingannata da Zeus'.[4]
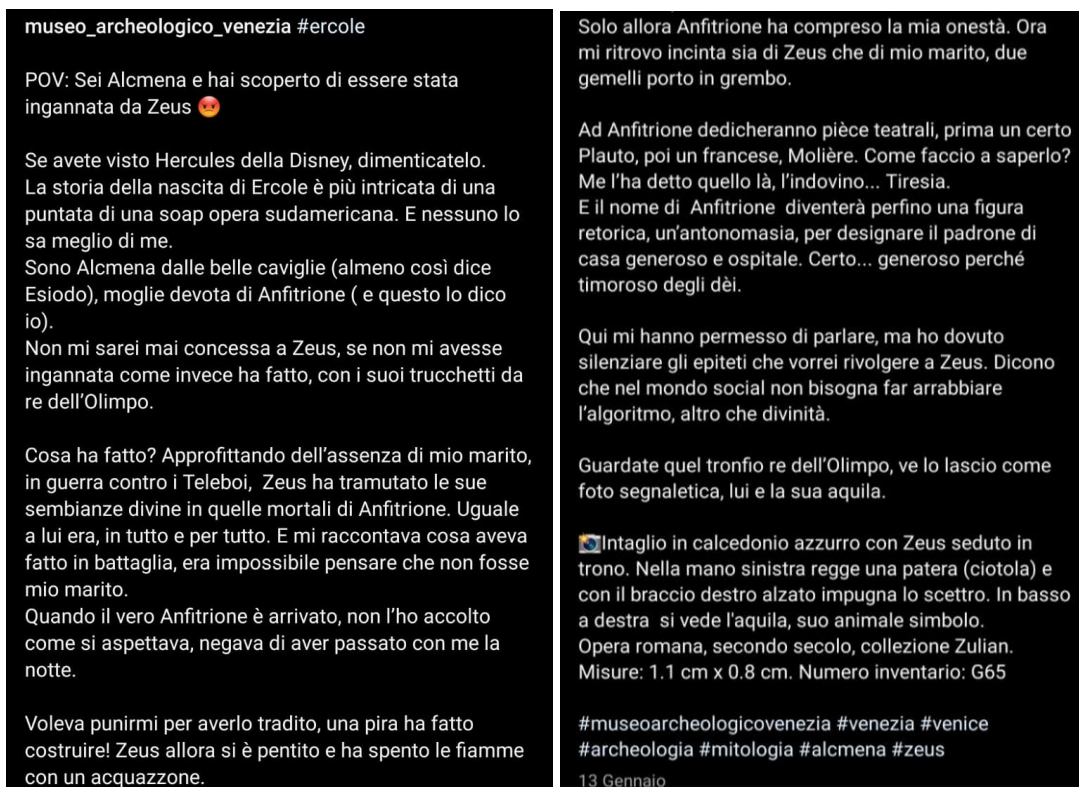
The caption starts with a catchy phrase mirroring a social media trend, POV (point of view). The trend used in photos and videos invites the audience to look at what is depicted in the photo or video and see it as if the viewer were in the specific situation (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pov#google_vignette).   Again, even if more understandable than the previous trends, the museum takes knowledge of internet culture and social trends for granted. The post uses this trend by asking the viewer to put themselves in Alcmena's shoes thus making the audience empathize with her. It then proceeds to explain the story of Alcmena, a woman who Zeus deceived and took advantage of, resulting in the birth of Hercules. In the caption Alcmena's story is explained in first person, coherently following the POV trend, using verbs in the first-person singular such as 'sono' (I am) and utilizing first-person singular pronouns 'mi'(me). The post uses comic wit when comparing Hercules' story to a 'soap opera'. At the end of the caption, it says:

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[4] English Translation: 'POV: You are Alcmena and you just found out you were deceived by Zeus'

'Qui mi hanno permesso di parlare, ma ho dovuto silenziare gli epiteti che vorrei rivolgere a Zeus. Dicono che nel mondo social non bisogna far arrabbiare l'algoritmo, altro che divinità'.[5]

Another use of comic wit can be found in 'ma ho dovuto silenziare gli epiteti che vorrei rivolgere a Zeus', speaking about the imbalance of power between Alcmena, who had to suppress her thoughts, and Zeus. While an example of satirical humor is 'dicono che nel mondo social non bisogna far arrabbiare l'algoritmo altro che divinità', by underlying the influence and power the algorithm has on social media managers and comparing the dynamics of social media platforms to the divine power of Greek gods. This post also references Greek mythology and Disney's *Hercules*, creating a connection between literary references and the work present in the museum, thus bringing the audience closer to history and mythology. Finally, the picture present in the post shows a carving, part of the museum's collection, depicting Zeus sitting on his throne (image 8).

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[5] English Translation: 'Here they allowed me to speak, but I had to suppress the epithets I wanted to address to Zeus. They say that in the social media's world you should not upset the algorithm, never mind the gods.'

museo_archeologico_venezia #ercole

POV: Sei Alcmena e hai scoperto di essere stata ingannata da Zeus 😡

Se avete visto Hercules della Disney, dimenticatelo. La storia della nascita di Ercole è più intricata di una puntata di una soap opera sudamericana. E nessuno lo sa meglio di me.
Sono Alcmena dalle belle caviglie (almeno così dice Esiodo), moglie devota di Anfitrione (e questo lo dico io).
Non mi sarei mai concessa a Zeus, se non mi avesse ingannata come invece ha fatto, con i suoi trucchetti da re dell'Olimpo.

Cosa ha fatto? Approfittando dell'assenza di mio marito, in guerra contro i Teleboi, Zeus ha tramutato le sue sembianze divine in quelle mortali di Anfitrione. Uguale a lui era, in tutto e per tutto. E mi raccontava cosa aveva fatto in battaglia, era impossibile pensare che non fosse mio marito.
Quando il vero Anfitrione è arrivato, non l'ho accolto come si aspettava, negava di aver passato con me la notte.

Voleva punirmi per averlo tradito, una pira ha fatto costruire! Zeus allora si è pentito e ha spento le fiamme con un acquazzone.

Solo allora Anfitrione ha compreso la mia onestà. Ora mi ritrovo incinta sia di Zeus che di mio marito, due gemelli porto in grembo.

Ad Anfitrione dedicheranno pièce teatrali, prima un certo Plauto, poi un francese, Molière. Come faccio a saperlo? Me l'ha detto quello là, l'indovino... Tiresia.
E il nome di Anfitrione diventerà perfino una figura retorica, un'antonomasia, per designare il padrone di casa generoso e ospitale. Certo... generoso perché timoroso degli dèi.

Qui mi hanno permesso di parlare, ma ho dovuto silenziare gli epiteti che vorrei rivolgere a Zeus. Dicono che nel mondo social non bisogna far arrabbiare l'algoritmo, altro che divinità.

Guardate quel tronfio re dell'Olimpo, ve lo lascio come foto segnaletica, lui e la sua aquila.

🖼️Intaglio in calcedonio azzurro con Zeus seduto in trono. Nella mano sinistra regge una patera (ciotola) e con il braccio destro alzato impugna lo scettro. In basso a destra si vede l'aquila, suo animale simbolo.
Opera romana, secondo secolo, collezione Zulian.
Misure: 1.1 cm x 0.8 cm. Numero inventario: G65

#museoarcheologicovenezia #venezia #venice #archeologia #mitologia #alcmena #zeus
13 Gennaio

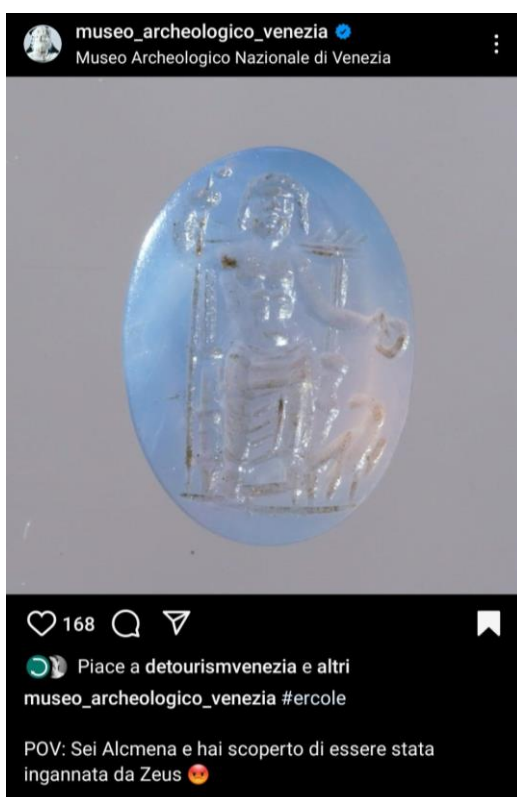Images 6-7. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

Image 8. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

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4.2 The Identities Building Tool

As we have seen in Chapter 1, museums aim to construct a social identity so their followers can recognize it through the use of social media and find a collective identity for themselves (Brown, 2019). This can be analysed through their choice of words and grammatical structures.

An example from the British Museum's page says as follows:

'Live, Laugh, Love like its 300 AD!

On the hunt for historical home décor inspiration? This Roman mosaic from Halicarnassus has you covered!

In the centre of the laurel wreath is a Greek inscription invoking a host of blessings:

Health, Life, Joy, Peace, Good, Cheer, Hope -

If you're looking for something to wish for in the coming year, we think these ancient ideals have held up pretty well against the test of time '

In this post, the museum presents itself as an institution able to combine humor and history. The phrase 'Live, Laugh, Love like its 300 AD' references an inspirational quote 'Live, laugh, Love' that in recent years became a meme about certain people (usually white and female) having these kinds of nonsense, fake inspirational phrases in their homes, and adding a little twist 'like its 300 AD' (https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Live%20Laugh%20Love). The sentence also presents a spelling mistake, which may be done on purpose, since this kind of humoristic phrase sometimes presents a non-standard type of spelling. The post (images 9-10) uses comic wit by humorously creating a connection between the words present in the artifact 'health, life, joy, peace, good cheer, hope' and the positive modern quote (turned into a meme). It is also an example of incongruity-resolution, since at first the idea of taking inspiration from ideals from 300 AD and the quote being surrounded by pink hearts seems puzzling. The resolution arrives when understanding the joke of the meme, further implemented by saying that these values have "held up pretty well against the test of time," the museum reinforces the connection between the ancient and modern worlds. Through this, the identity of the museum seems that of a funny museum that is capable of connecting modern memes to ancient

inscriptions. At the same time, the museum also shows a more authoritative cultural identity when providing historical information about the Greek mosaic, so it aims to establish itself as a safe and reliable source of information. Also, in analysing what type of identity the museum is talking to the audience as a friend to give suggestions to, underlying the creation of a close community. Moreover, the hashtag #Manifesting, a term frequently used in internet culture, with the sparkles emoji is written humorously and is linked to the topic of positivity.
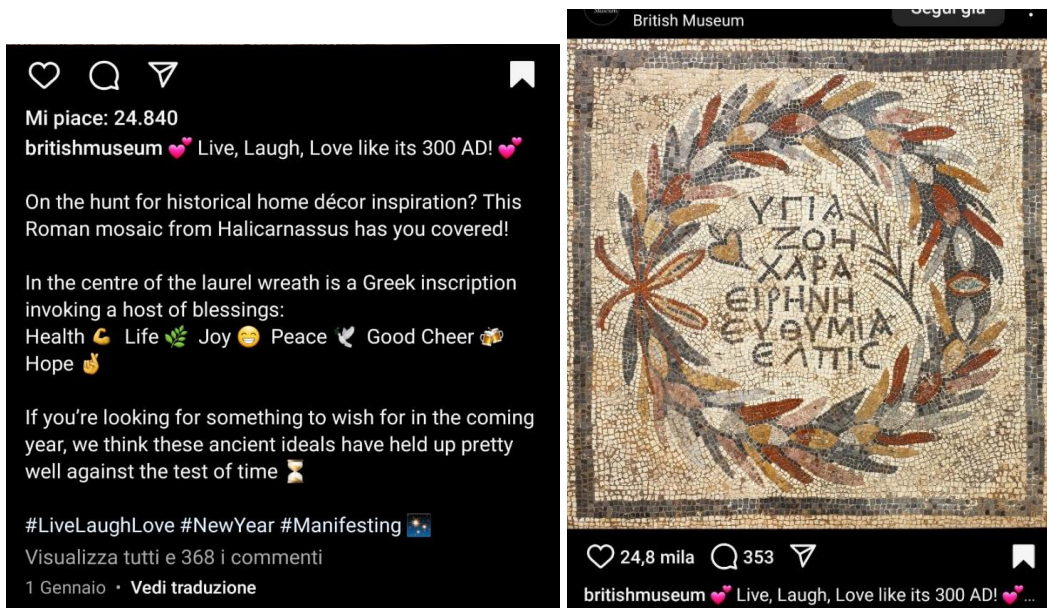
Images 9-10. *Screenshot from the British Museum's Instagram page*

Another post from the British Museum presents 'The bestiary of museum visitors' (images 11-12) comparing the visitors of the museums to animals with specific characteristics:

'Which of these cultured creepy crawlies describes you best?'

The post begins with a question, asking users to identify themselves with 'cultured creepy crawlies', describing each one of them in the photo of the post and making them reflect on their behaviors and attitudes when visiting a museum. The phrase also presents an incongruity-resolution, since the creepy crawlies are described as being 'cultured', which is not an adjective one would usually associate with them, and is an

example of comic wit. Then the audience understands the connection between the 'creepy crawlies' and culture with the term being used to describe museum types. The beasts in question are ants, butterflies, ticks, fish, grubs, peacocks, dragons, and grasshoppers (image 11). The types are cleverly described by the animal and by museums' visitor attitudes employing some light humor. For example, 'peacocks' are visitors who go to the museum to be seen, 'grasshoppers' hop between objects and exhibitions, and 'butterflies' flutter around rooms without following a particular order. By asking a direct question to the audience, through a call to action, at the end it asks users to tag someone who represents one of the animals in the comments. With this post, the identity of the museum is of an active, engaging museum that wants the audience to share their opinions with them and wants it to feel part of the community by acting as an informal and approachable institution, further understandable by the use of emojis.
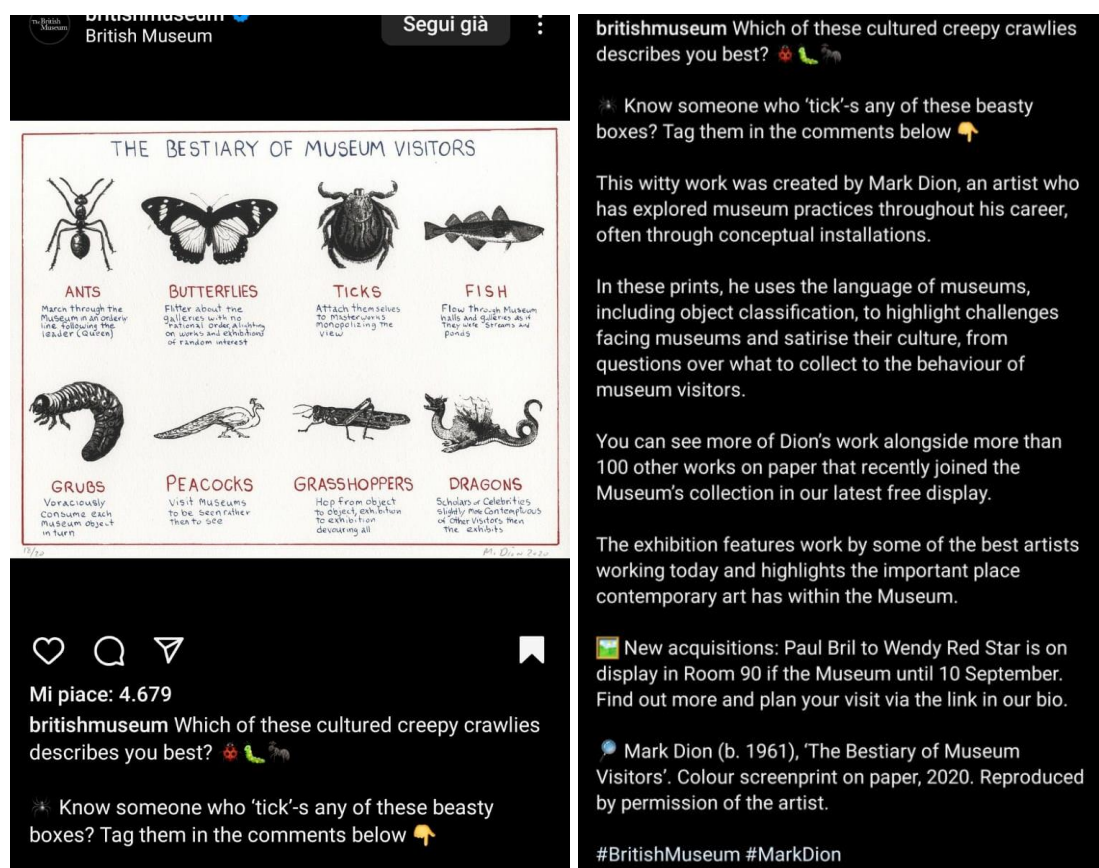

Image 11-12. *Screenshot from the British Museum's Instagram page*

The Archaeological Museum of Venice presented the following meme:

'Amici, appassionati di archeologia e non, se pensate che l'antichità sia un buon argomento per relazionarvi con una persona che sobilla i vostri sentimenti, allora seguite la nostra pagina e i nostri post, ricchi di preziosi consigli archeologici per evitare brutte sorprese!'[6]

In this case, the museum acts as a confidant, a sort of friend giving dating advice to another friend. The photo (image 13) depicts a meme of a guy inviting a girl to go see dinosaurs at the Archaeological Museum and the girl blocks him right away. The dinosaur theme is a recurring meme for the Archaeological Museum since it does not host dinosaurs even though visitors expect it to. The post begins with the hashtag #friendzone, engaging with pop culture and underlying the theme of the post. The whole post uses comic wit, by positioning itself as a reliable source for archaeological insights, which would then become great topics of conversation to impress the person they are interested in and dating advice. The use of the winking emoji adds a layer of humor. The hashtags #amoilmav (I love the Archaeological Museum of Venice) and #epicfail, drawn from contemporary internet culture, further show the relatable, playful, and approachable identity the museum wants to portray. The museum also shows its awareness of social media language and trends that usually are relatable to young audiences. Moreover, the post is an example of 'community-based humor' (Romell and Segedi, 2022) with the page's followers since it is an inner joke of the Instagram page of the museums. Ans it also fosters a sense of community by stating that the users should follow the page to remain updated about their 'preziosi consigli archeologici', hoping to establish an interactive relationship with its audience. It is based on incongruity-resolution, the audience may at first find it strange to receive love advice from a museum, but it is then cleared when the purpose is explained.

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[6] Friends, whether archaeology enthusiasts or not, if you think that antiquity is a good topic to relate to a person who stirs your feelings, then follow our page and our posts, full of valuable archaeological tips to avoid nasty surprises!

Image 13. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of*
Venice's Instagram page

Another post, similar to one presented by the British Museum invites museum-goers
to identify themselves in archetypes:

'Conoscere il proprio pubblico e i potenziali visitatori è una strategia fondamentale.
Correva l'anno 2021 e ponevamo timide domande ai frequentatori dei musei!'[7]
Abbiamo individuato tre profili e ci piacerebbe sapere in quale vi riconoscete di più.
APPROCCIO FILOSOFICO:
Che meraviglia l'arte! I musei sono per voi un balsamo dell'anima, un piacere ed una
continua scoperta. Percorrere le sale è per voi un'esperienza emotiva e sensoriale tale

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[7] Knowing your audience and potential visitors is a fundamental strategy.
The year was 2021, and we were asking shy questions to the museum-goers!

da farvi perdere il senso del tempo; così trascorrete ore in solitaria contemplazione, nutrendo il vostro spirito e attingendo a piene mani al mondo ideale, amabilmente offerto dalle opere esposte.

APPROCCIO GAUDENTE:

Il museo è per voi un'occasione conviviale, da condividere con i vostri amici tra un aperitivo e un'apericena. Del resto l'arte stimola sete e appetito ed è per questo che voi non vi presentate mai in museo senza aver prima allentato i vostri freni inibitori con la giusta dose di spirito. Il museo diventa quindi per voi espressione di empatia e buonumore che aiuta a rinsaldare i vostri rapporti con i compagni di scorribande artistiche.

APPROCCIO IMBRUTTITO:

Che sofferenza l'arte! Impossibile per voi visitare un museo con adeguato distacco. È piuttosto un'onda emotiva che travolge il vostro senso estetico così provato, a vostro dire, dalle ripetute manchevolezze dell'allestimento: illuminazione scadente, didascalie incomprensibili, povertà di contenuti, scarsa chiarezza espositiva, villaneria di staff e visitatori che, con insolita pervicacia, impediscono il vostro pieno godimento. Secondo una teoria non ancora accreditata, sareste in grado di uccidere anche vostro fratello piuttosto che entrare in un museo siffatto! Diteci qual è il vostro approccio![8]

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[8] Here are 3 profiles, so we would like to know which one you declare yourself to be.
PHILOSOPHICAL ATTITUDE:
Art is amazing! The museums are a balm for your soul, a pleasure and an ongoing discovery. To walk in the rooms of a museum is an emotional and sensory experience so that you lose any concept of time in solitary contemplation, feeding your spirit and getting to the ideals offered by the artworks on display.
BON VIVANT ATTITUDE:
The museum is a convivial opportunity to share with your friend between the aperitif and the happy hour. After all art whets appetite and thirst so that you never visit a museum without having lost your restraint. The museum is therefore an expression of empathy and good spirits that helps to strengthen the relationship with your companions.
BRUTALIZED ATTITUDE:
Art is suffering! You can't visit a museum without a proper distance. It is a sort of emotional wave that overwhelms your aesthetic sense so raddled, in your opinion, by the failing of the museum set-up: poor lights, labels not understandable, miserable subjects, no clearness at all and rude staff and other visitors that prevent you enjoying the artworks. According to a theory not yet proved, you would even kill your brother rather than visit such a museum!
What is your attitude then?

The post opens up by talking about how important it is to know the public and visitors as a social strategy, identifying the museum as being resourceful and self-aware. The three profiles are described in detail and offer multiple choices of attitudes for the users (of the Archaeological Museum but also museums in general). The 'philosophical attitude' is for people who have a deep emotional experience when visiting museums, where they spend hours in contemplation. The 'bon vivant attitude' regards people who live in the museum socially, involving friends and creating a connection between arts and museum companions. The 'brutalized attitude' is for people who are heavy critics of the museums' setting and in general pay close attention to details and have high standards. The incongruity-resolution in this case is created by museum-goers' profiles being presented playfully and informally, which is usually not how one would expect museums' regulars to be. The resolution comes when the audience 'plays' with the trend to find which attitude describes their behaviour best. It is also an example of 'community-based humor' (Romell and Segedi, 2022) by asking the audience to identify themselves with one of the three types described. Through this post, the museum positions itself as audience-focused, making sure to describe all the different attitudes toward art and implying that it is a space where everyone is welcome. Moreover, it presents them as a museum that does not take itself too seriously and can combine fun and intellect. In this case, the post was also translated into English in comments, therefore the target includes international people, not only Italian visitors.
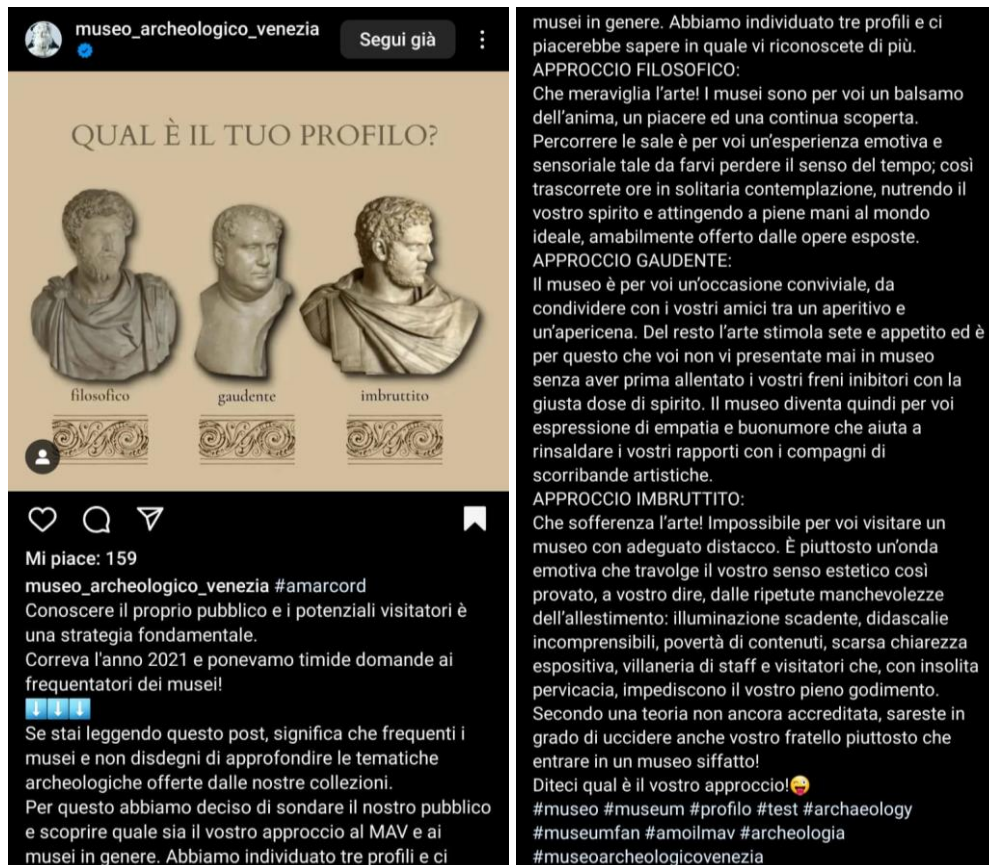
Image 14-15. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

4.3 The Intertextuality Tool

Occasionally social media refers to other pieces of media for their contents, such as movies, books, and songs. In this case, intertextuality is at play.

Starting with an example from the British Museum utilizing a famous propaganda statement:

'When it comes to "Keep Calm and Carry On" this guy has us all beat'

The reference is based on Britain's World War II statement propaganda, and it has since then become a well-known slogan used all around the world and in a meme. The museum aims to connect the cultural catchphrase to Xie An's attitude. Comic wit is used in this sentence, and therefore the incongruity-process is in action, as we have seen in other posts, establishing a playful contrast between the hardship Xie An had to

face, while always remaining calm, and the playful nature of the slogan. In modern times, the slogan is used to comment on daily struggles, which are far away from what the official struggled with. The caption also presents some emojis, usually symbolising strength. The humor is 'community-based' (Romell and Segedi, 2022) since the audience is in on the playful meaning of the context. Moreover, the post is a way to educate the audience and promote an exhibition representing the lives of Chinese government officials.
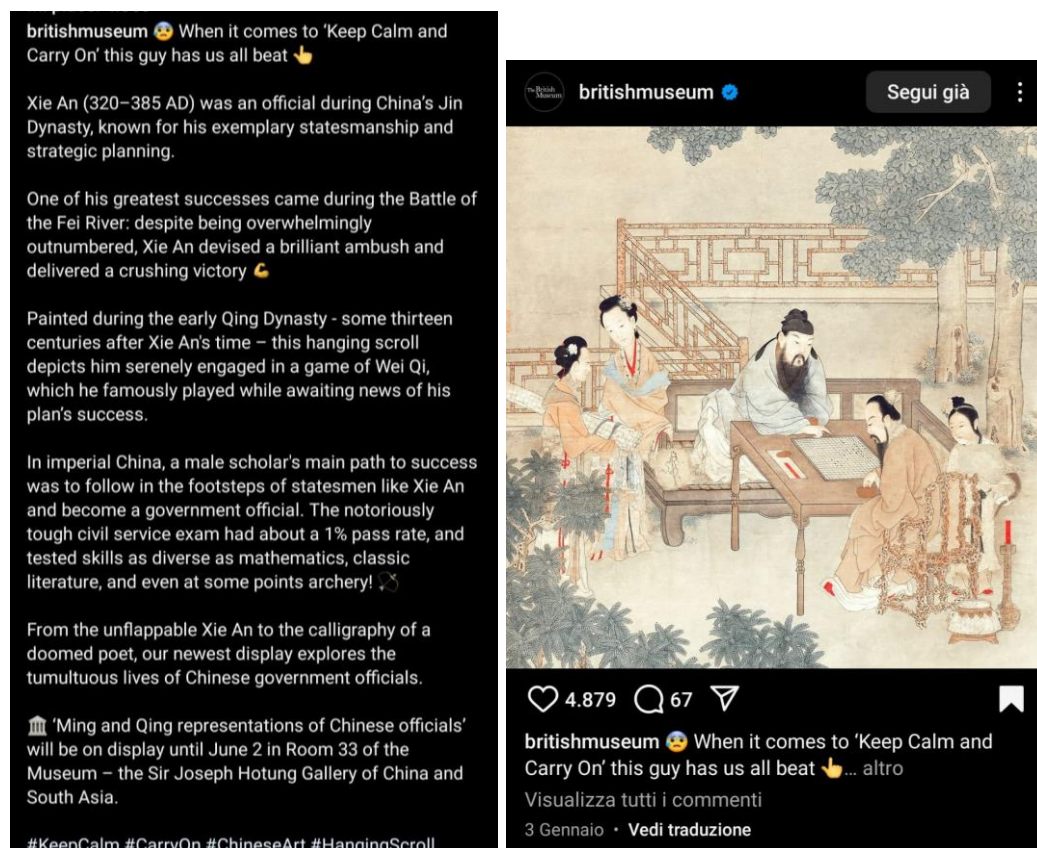

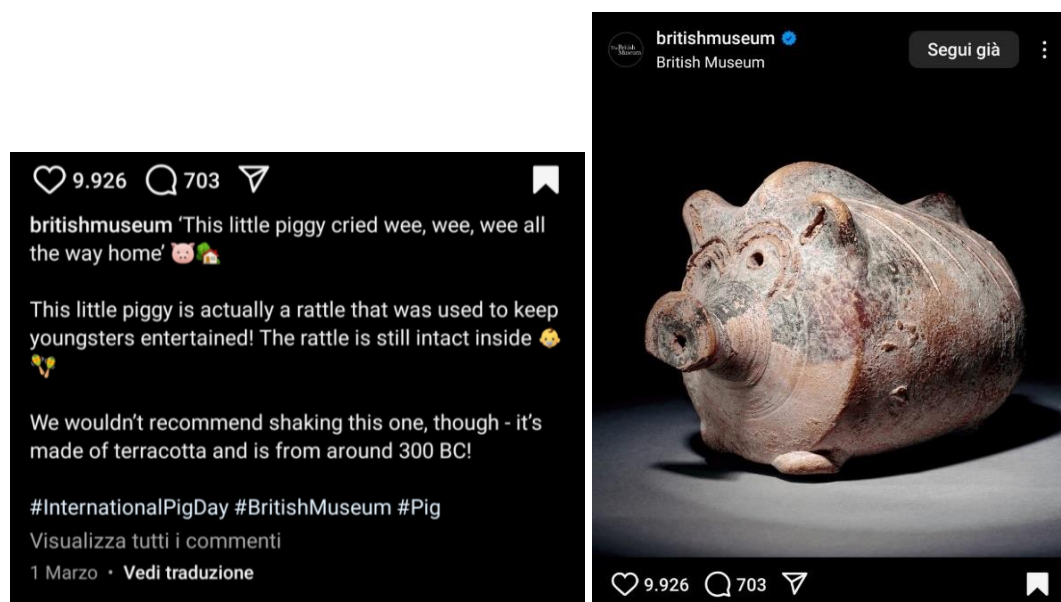Image 16-17. *Screenshot from the British Museum's Instagram page*

Another example from the British Museum, based on the words of the famous nursery poem' last line:

 'this little piggy cried wee, wee, wee all the way home.
This little piggy is actually a rattle that was used to keep youngsters entertained! The rattle is still intact inside

We wouldn't recommend shaking this one, though - it's made of terracotta and is from around 300 BC!'

The post's focus is pigs and the occasion of it is International Pig Day, making the post more memorable and engaging. As a way to celebrate the day, the museum shared the last part of an old nursery song. Comic wit is used when it says 'We wouldn't recommend shaking this one, though' since the artifact was a rattle used to entertain kids, jokingly acknowledging the fragility of the ancient artifact made of terracotta and belonging to 300 AD. Moreover, the connection with the nursery rhyme was also made because, just like the rattle, it was employed to entertain kids. It can be considered an example of sentimental humor, given that it relies on the element of nostalgia evoked by childhood memories, thus creating a bridge between past and present. The playful nature of the description's tone is amplified by the use of emojis, such as the pig, house, baby, and toys. The post also has an educational purpose by giving information about a probably lesser-known object (image 19), making a piece of history easily accessible to the audience.

Images 18-19. *Screenshot from the British Museum's Instagram page*

The Archaeological Museum of Venice shared a post depicting a Caryatid, a female figure of classical architecture acting instead of a column for support, inside the stereotypical Barbie box. The post states:

'Ci siamo adeguati anche noi al trend rosa del momento. Purtroppo non siamo riusciti a colorare il museo, come avremmo voluto, tuttavia, per celebrare un'immagine iconica femminile senza tempo, presentiamo a tutti i follower, in esclusiva mondiale, la nuova Barbie CARIATIDE, completa di chitone, himation e una maschera tragica come accessorio. Potrete vestirla, pettinarla e giocare a fare gli archeologi o i collezionisti d'antichità. Cosa aspettate? Venite a giocare con noi!'[9]

There are two references in the post, one to the Barbie movie and one to Barbie as the iconic doll, a symbol of femininity, fashion, and trends. At the time of the content's publication, the Barbie movie (July 2023) was just released. This explains the caption 'ci siamo adeguati anche noi al trend rosa del momento'. There are also examples of comic wit, which among humor types perform better for advertising purposes (Anad and Sternthal, 1990): ' presentiamo a tutti i follower, in esclusiva mondiale, la nuova Barbie CARIATIDE, completa di chitone, himation e una maschera tragica come accessorio', they are presenting the greek statue as the new barbie, as if it were real promotional ads, instead of having regular Barbie' accessories she is presented with clothes and accessories belonging to the Ancient Greek's world. And again 'Potrete vestirla, pettinarla e giocare a fare gli archeologi o i collezionisti d'antichità', reinforcing the idea of playing with the Caryatid Barbie as if it was a real doll. Through this humorous content the museum wanted to express also an educational aim by spreading information about Greek customs and architecture, and possibly the final invite to play with the new Barbie is an invite to learn more about the historical figure presented in the text. Moreover, incongruity-resolution is caused by the opposition between the pop-culture icon Barbie and an element of classic architecture viewed as

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[9] We too have adapted to the pink trend of the moment. Unfortunately, we didn't manage to colour the museum as we would have liked, however, to celebrate a timeless iconic female image, we present to all followers, as a world exclusive, the new Barbie CARIATIDE, complete with chiton, himation and a tragic mask as an accessory. You can dress her up, comb her hair and play at being an archaeologist or antiquities collector. What are you waiting for? Come and play with us!

a Barbie doll, it is then resolved when associated with the viral Barbie trend of that specific moment. Comic wit is used when the post mentions how they were not able to colour the walls of the museum pink (referring to Barbies' iconic colour pink), which is not how someone would imagine a museum to look like.

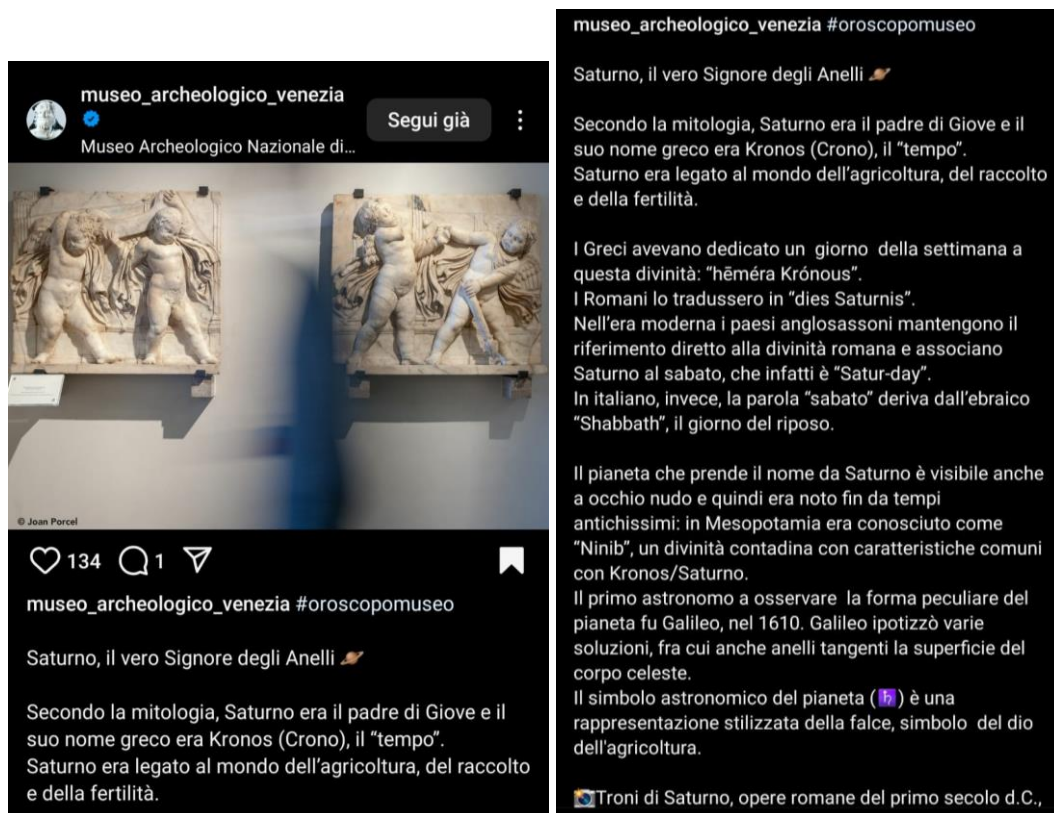Images 20-21. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

In another post from the Archaeological Museum, another reference is present:

'Saturno, il vero Signore degli Anelli'.[10]

The phrase at the beginning of the post relies on two different references. The subject is the god Saturn. The first reference regards the planet Saturn, known for being surrounded by a system of rings, and Lord of the Rings, the fantasy book by J.RR Tolkien, also turned into a movie. In the post, the origin of the discovery of Saturn's rings was made by Galileo in 1610. The posts then connect three different worlds: the

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[10] Saturn, the real Lord of the Rings

fantasy world, the mythological world, and astronomy. It is also an example of comic wit, and therefore presents an incongruity-resolution, by comparing the ancient god Saturn to the Lord of the Rings, which represents pop culture, perhaps with the intent of making mythology more relevant today. The museum relies on the knowledge of the audience of the planet and the cultural phenomenon of the 'Lord of the Rings'. The main aim of the post is to be educational, utilizing humor at first to get the followers' attention and then spreading information about Saturn, which is described in detail in the caption, thus enhancing the public's engagement. From his history in mythology, explaining that the day of the week 'Saturday', and the planet Saturn took their name from the god. Moreover, the post is also a way to educate the audience about the objects present in the museum (image 22).

Images 22-23. *Screenshots from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

4.4 Significance Building Tool

With this tool, it is important to look at how words play in the creation of significance, and how they give meaning to certain aspects of the text instead of others. In the social media context, this can be done by employing for example emojis or hashtags. The use of humor and wordplay is also a way to give significance to certain themes and engage the audience.

One example from the British Museum begins with:

'St Damian is having a serious glow-up for #TransformationTuesday' (image 25)

The most significant words in the text are marked with a hashtag, which on Instagram is a way to highlight certain topics and be part of the hashtag community or trend. In this case, the words highlighted are '#GlowUp, #TransformationTuesday, #Conservation and #Mural. According to the Cambridge dictionary, 'glow' is a noun and as a verb has the meaning of 'light', 'shining' and it can refer to an object or a person with a positive meaning of looking happy or healthy or it can also refer to a positive feeling, while 'up' is an adverb with the meaning of 'high' and used in the creation of many phrasal verbs. The term 'glow-up' originated in African American Vernacular English and then became a social trend referring to a physical or mental improvement (https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Glow%20Up). Through this post, the British Museum wants to make a comparison between social trends of people showing their 'glow-up' journey and sharing tips, with the mural representing St. Damien having a visual improvement after being treated with laser cleaning technology. The caption is matched with a sped-up video showing the process of the polishing of the mural, which from being 'grungy' has now become 'glittering'. Moreover, '#TransformationTuesday' is a very popular hashtag on Instagram (16.7 million posts) which depicts users sharing their physical transformations and improvements. Another important word is that of conservation which represents all the steps to take care of an ancient artifact, and the mural represents the subject of the post. There are three emojis present, at the end of each section, they aim to reinforce what is written in the description (sparkles for glow-up, medical equipment referring to medicine, and a sponge with soap when talking about the mural's glow-up or restoration, In this case, the use of humor is based on incongruity-resolution of the

modern expression 'glow-up' attributed to a positive transformation in someone and the ancient figure to which it is applied. The resolution happens when realizing the meaning of the cultural trend, elicits a humorous response.
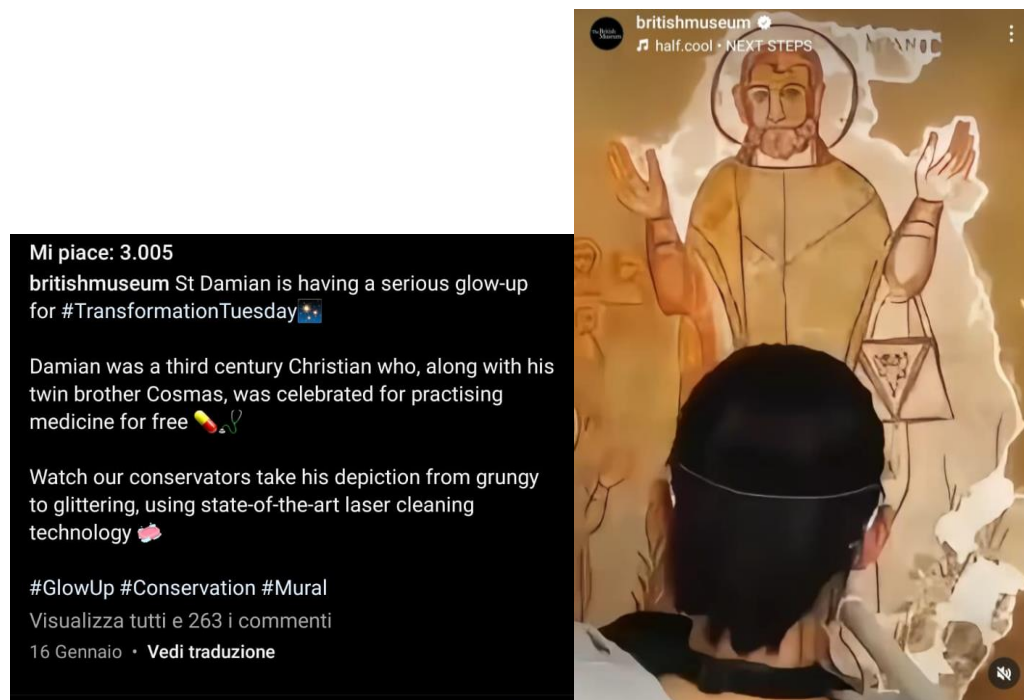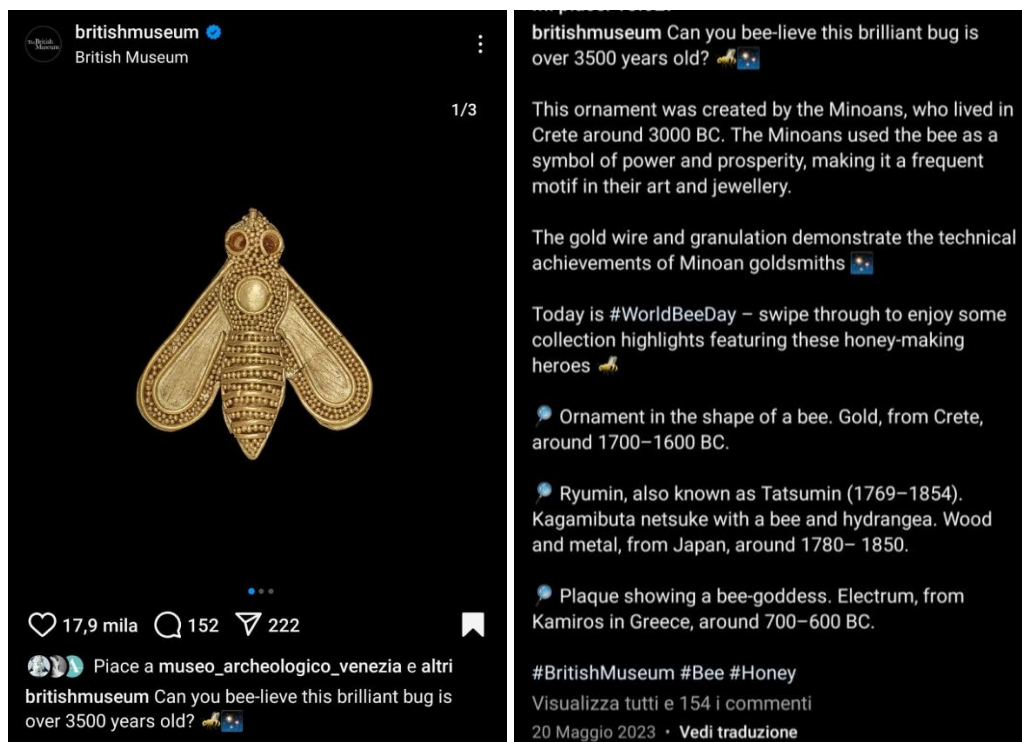

Images 24-25. Screenshots from the British Museum's Instagram page

In another post, the British Museum shared the following:

'Can you bee-lieve this brilliant bug is 3500 years old?'

The subjects of the post are bees. They are not only expressed by one of the nouns but also through a pun and wordplay 'bee-lieve' created by substituting the verb 'believe' with 'bee-live', thus introducing the subject of the post. Connecting bee-related ancient objects to the international bee day is a way to create a connection between the past and present day. The use of emojis reflects the elements described in the post and enhances the visual aspect of it (emoji of the bee, emoji of sparkles when near the words 'brilliant' and 'goldsmiths', and small lines to describe the artifacts placed in the museum. The use of the hashtag #WorldBeeDay in the middle of the description marks the importance of the event and in general, brings the focus on the actual care

for bees. In that sentence, the use of a pun lightheartedly connects the word 'bee' with the verb 'to believe'. Moreover, they are usually put in use since they are a low-risk kind of humor, and in this case, it align with the purpose of the post. The aim of the post is educational, both for the pieces of the museums' collections being shared (an example is in image 26) and also by giving information about bees and their importance in nature, being described as 'honey-making heroes'.

Images 26-27. Screenshots from the British Museum's Instagram page
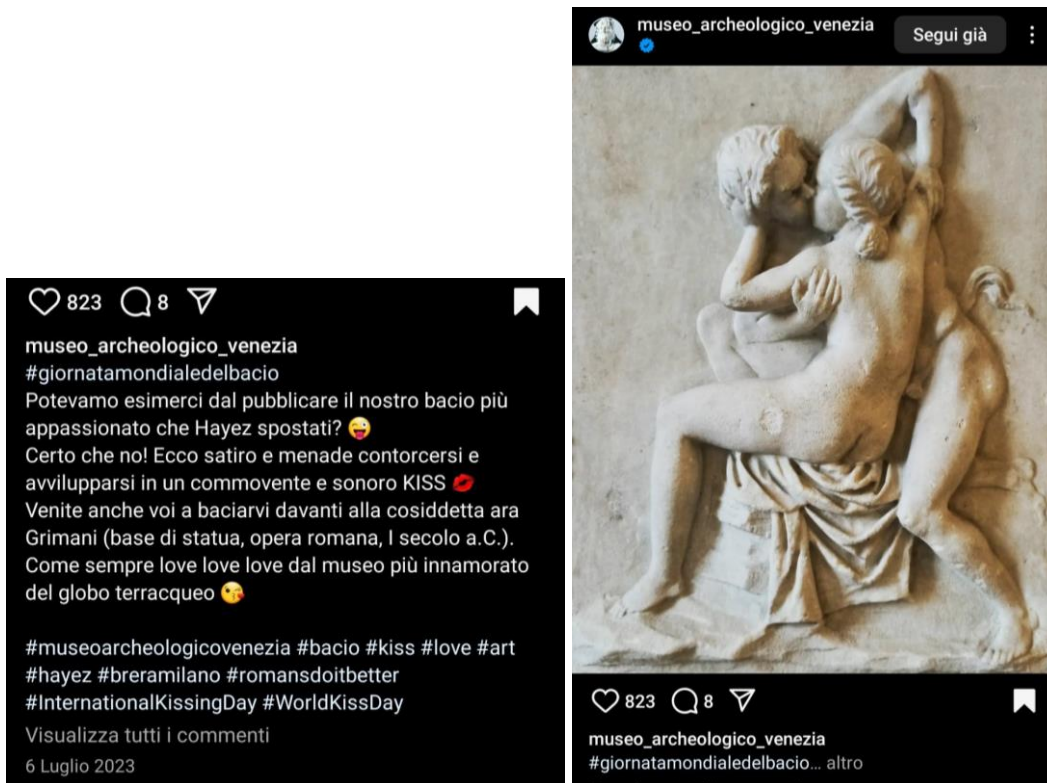
Post from the Archaeological Musem of Venice:

'Potevamo esimerci dal pubblicare il nostro bacio più appassionato che Hayez spostati? Certo che no! Ecco satiro e menade contorcersi e avvilupparsi in un commovente e sonoro KISS

Venite anche voi a baciarvi davanti alla cosiddetta ara Grimani (base di statua, opera romana, I secolo a.C.). Come sempre love love love dal museo più innamorato del globo terracqueo.'[11]

The word 'KISS' written in capital letters with the adjective 'sonoro' an emoji of a kiss beside serves as a type of onomatopoeia, connecting the audience with the typical sound of a kiss. The use of the hashtag #giornatamondialedelbacio reminds and reinforces the importance of the occasion of the post. Among the other hashtags, the ones that stand out more are #WorldKissDay. #InternationalKissingDay, which is still connected to the celebration of the day. And, #romansdoitbetter, which represents the ancient version of the famous modern slogan 'Italians do it better', is another example of connecting the past with the present time. The repetition of 'love' three times represents the museum's attitude towards and creates emotional empathy in the audience. By referring to the passionate kiss depicted in Hayez's *The Kiss*, the post can create expectations of romanticism and culture. The post is a way to promote an example of romance present in the Archaeological Museum, represented by the satyr and maenad, and inviting the audience to kiss in front of this work thus becoming part of the narrative. With its inviting and playful tone, the museum enhances its likeability and creates a sense of connection with the audience. By defining itself as the most in love museum on the globe, the museum brings the attention of the community around the celebration of love.

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[11] Could we possibly refrain from posting our most passionate kiss that would even make Hayez step aside? Of course not! Here's satyr and maenad writhing and entwining themselves in a moving and resounding KISS
Come and kiss in front of the so-called ara Grimani (base of a statue, Roman work, 1st century BC).
As always love love love from the most loving museum on earth

Images 28-29. Screenshots from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page

In the following post, the Archaeological Museum of Venice gives a shout-out to its community:

Ma che ci importa dell'algoritmo di Meta?

I like, i cuoricini, il tasso di interazione non sono certo le metriche che ci interessano per valutare la performance delle nostre pagine social.

La capacità di engagement per noi ha altri parametri, ad esempio la misuriamo in dolcetti! Come quelli che una nostra affezionata follower ci ha portato.

Grazie @mandrunia1 per il regalo, graditissimo da tutto lo staff del Museo, statue cubo comprese. E voi, amici follower, se volete aumentare le nostre interazioni, venite a trovarci in Museo e procurateci nuovi insight.[12]

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[12] But what do we care about Meta's algorithm?
The likes, the hearts, the interaction rate are certainly not the metrics we care about to evaluate the performance of our social pages.
Engagement for us has other metrics, for example we measure it in sweets! Like the ones that one of our affectionate followers brought us

In this post, the theme of the algorithm comes back again, utilizing both comic wit and satirical humor, once again, by implying that it is criticizing the modern need for social media managers to be dependent on Instagram insights (Meta). The word 'Museo' is written in capital letters, positioning themselves as an important museum and establishing their authority. Moreover, at the end of the caption, it says:

'biscotti sardi a forma di cuore (XXI secolo AD) e statua cubo, VIII-VII secolo a.C., collezione Girolamo Zulian' [13]

This last part of the description, introduced by the emoji of a camera, introduces the gift of the cookies from a follower positioning them near a statue of the museum and thus presenting them as both being part of the museum using the coordination of 'and' and putting the two on the same level since community engagement is beneficial to the museum as an entity. This is also a use of comic wit, by positioning a bag of cookies near a statue of the VIII/VII century AD. Through this representation, the museum shows its values and the importance of relationship-building. This is reinforced by the use of the hashtag #weloveourcommunity. In the post, the relationship between the museum's visitors and the community is more important than social media metrics. The aim of this content is to give a shout-out the the community of the museum and at the end take the chance to educate the audience about a piece of the collection (image 31). The humor is 'community-based'(Romell and Segedi, 2022), by putting the audience in the museum's narrative and sharing a cultural reference with them.

Thank you @mandrunia1 for the gift, much appreciated by all the Museum staff, including the cube statues.
And you, fellow followers, if you want to increase our interactions, come visit us at the Museum and get us new insights.

[13] Sardinian heart-shaped biscuit (21st century AD) and cube statue, 8th-7th century BC, Girolamo Zulian collection
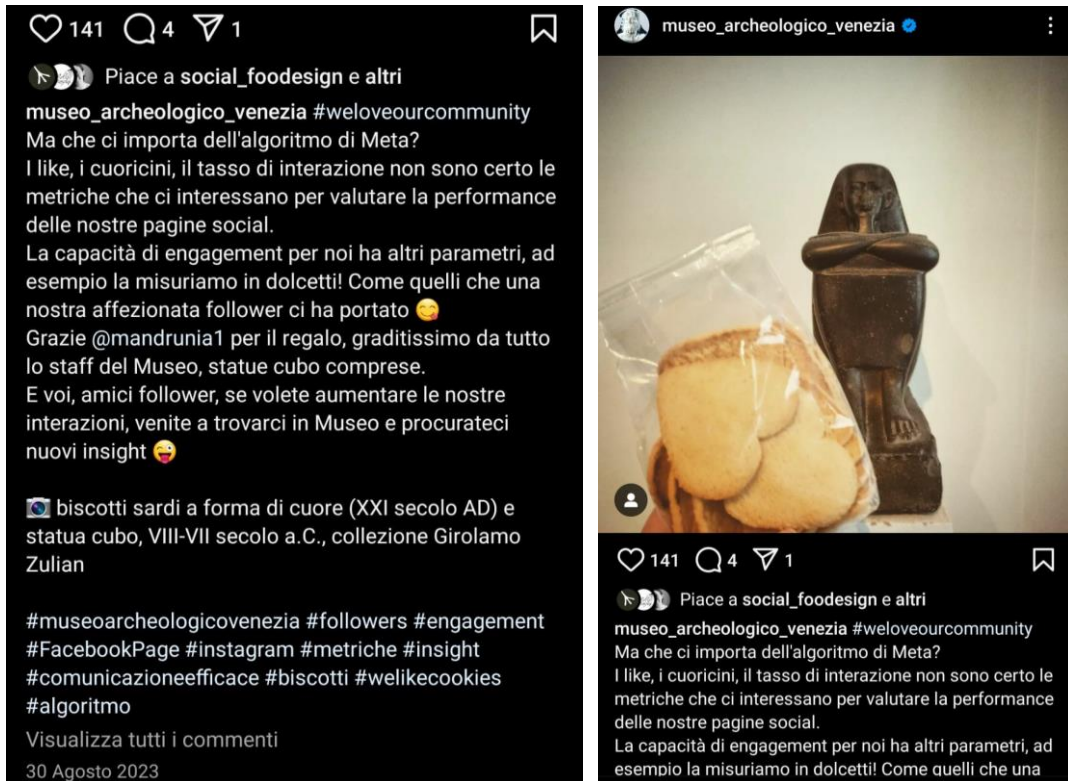
Images 30-31. *Screenshots from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

4.5 The Connections Building Tool

This tool is used to connect things from the world to each other, they are not always explicit, leaving the audience to figure out the connections through the Fill In tool. Through their social media posts, it is possible to analyse which connections museums want to foster to entertain their audience and educate them through humor and historical references. In the British Museum the following example was taken into consideration:

'Bored of banana bread? Sick of sourdough starters? Maybe you don't know your mezzaluna from your mezze platter?
It's out with the new and in with the old, as we delve into the historical cookbooks to share our favourite recipes from ancient Greece and Rome.'

The post connects current popular recipes, for example, the recipe for banana bread became very successful in the last years (https://www.delish.com/food-news/a44005906/banana-bread-popular/) and sourdough, creating a contrast between

this trendy kind of food and mezzaluna and mezze platters, which are more unfamiliar culinary dishes. The question expresses a sort of climax, starting from the most known and trendy dish to the most unfamiliar. This phrase presents an incongruity-resolution, inviting the audience to take a break from feeling overwhelmed by constant food trends and be reminded of rich culinary history. By referencing Greek and Roman cuisine it also creates a connection between old dishes and modern ones and encourages users to experience old recipes and bring them back to the present. Moreover, 'It's out with the new and in with the old' conveys the purpose of the post of making history relevant and not forgetting about old traditions, thus establishing an explicit connection between the old and the new. Therefore, the post is also educating the audience about old recipes strengthening appreciation of Roman and Greek traditions in a contemporary context and promoting a part of their collection (image 33). The call to action at the end does not simply involve liking or commenting on the post but engaging in a deeper sense by dealing with old recipes.
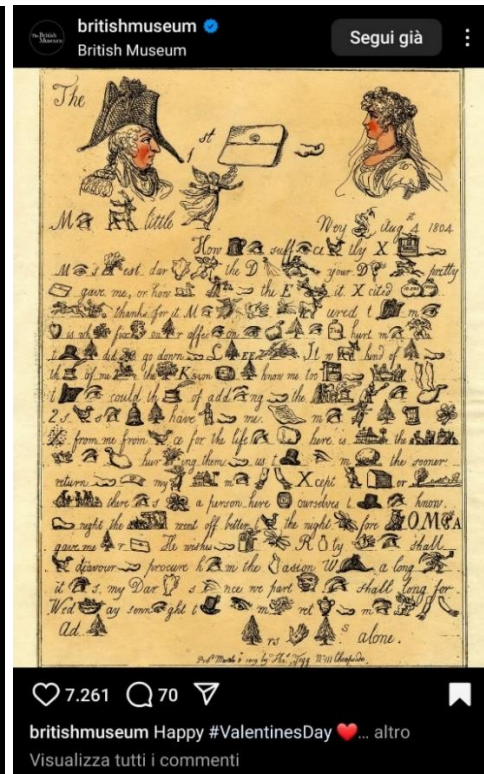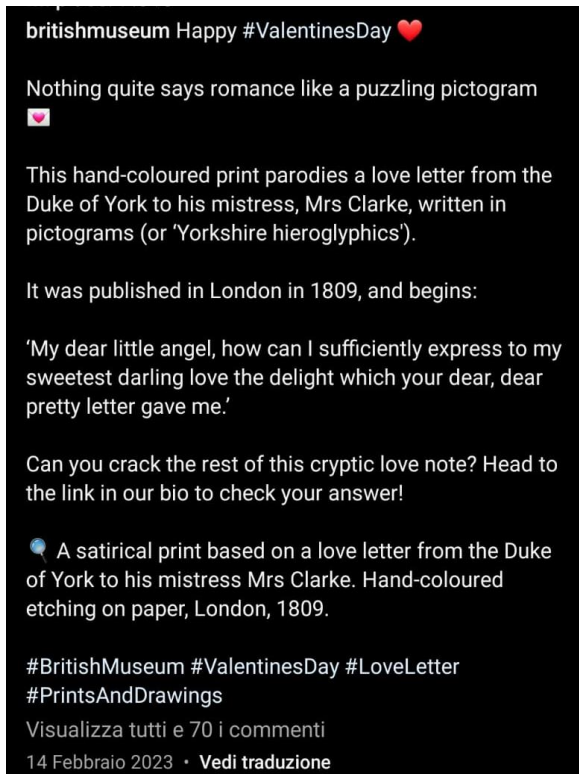

Images 32-33. Screenshots from the British Museum's Instagram page

Another example from the British Museum:

'Happy #ValentinesDay
Nothing quite says romance like a puzzling pictogram'

In this case, the festivity of Valentine's Day, the topic of the post presented with a hashtag and a heart emoji, is an opportunity to connect modern-day romantic gestures with ancient ones. A puzzling pictogram is a symbol expressing a visual resemblance to an object. is shown in the photo of the post (image 35). Incongruity-resolution between the expected sweet and romantic message for the festivity and the unexpected, puzzling nature of the pictogram, which represents a parody of a love letter. Valentine's Day and the pictogram are connected by the themes of love and romance. Through this connection, the museum builds a bridge between different costumes of past times and present times, and by inviting the audience to 'crack the rest of this cryptic love note' the audience becomes a conduit for the connection and is actively involved in establishing a connection with a museum's artifact. Also, it is an example of 'community-based humor' (Romell and Segedi, 2022), given that by deciphering the puzzling pictogram, the audience will be involved in a shared experience fostering a sense of community. This is also a way for the users to be engaged in a fun and intriguing challenge. The post connects love to the past and the present, implying it is a universal humor experience, whose forms of expression may change over time.

Images 34-35. Screenshots from the British Museum's Instagram page

In another post of the Archaeological Museum of Venice:

'++ BREAKING NEWS++

SIETE INSETTI

SIETE INSETTI

Sugli schermi di alcune stazioni italiane sono comparsi dei messaggi misteriosi

Noi li abbiamo interpretati come inviti a visitare musei alla ricerca di invertebrati artropodi.

Venite nella nostra vetrina delle gemme in sala 7 a sbirciare farfalle, mosche e formiche!'[14]

The caption starts with 'BREAKING NEWS' mimicking an urgent and attention-grabbing style of news headlines. The phrase written in capital letters 'SIETE INSETTI' which may sound strange at first, refers to an example of guerrilla marketing promoted by Netflix to advertise a new TV show. The Archaeological Museum took the chance to comment on this topic and continued by inviting the audience to check out their collections of butterflies, flies, and ants. The museum managed to create a connection between their insect collection and the publicity of a streaming platform, showing their way of keeping up with current trends and keeping up with marketing strategies. The post presents an example of comic wit when saying they interpreted the publicity as a chance to go visit the museum by adapting the apparently strange message to something relevant to them. In this case, the humorous message introduces an opportunity for the museum to educate the audience by describing the insects and connecting their stories to mythology, referencing Greek mythology and writers, but also a well-known cartoon 'A Bug's Life', solidifying the connection between past and present representations. Sharing pictures of the museum's collection (image 38) and the specific location (image 36) is a way to give insights on the gems representing ants and thus a way to educate the audience on pieces present in the museum they might not know about.

museo_archeologico_venezia ++ BREAKING NEWS++

SIETE INSETTI
SIETE INSETTI

Sugli schermi di alcune stazioni italiane sono comparsi dei messaggi misteriosi
Noi li abbiamo interpretati come inviti a visitare musei alla ricerca di invertebrati artropodi.

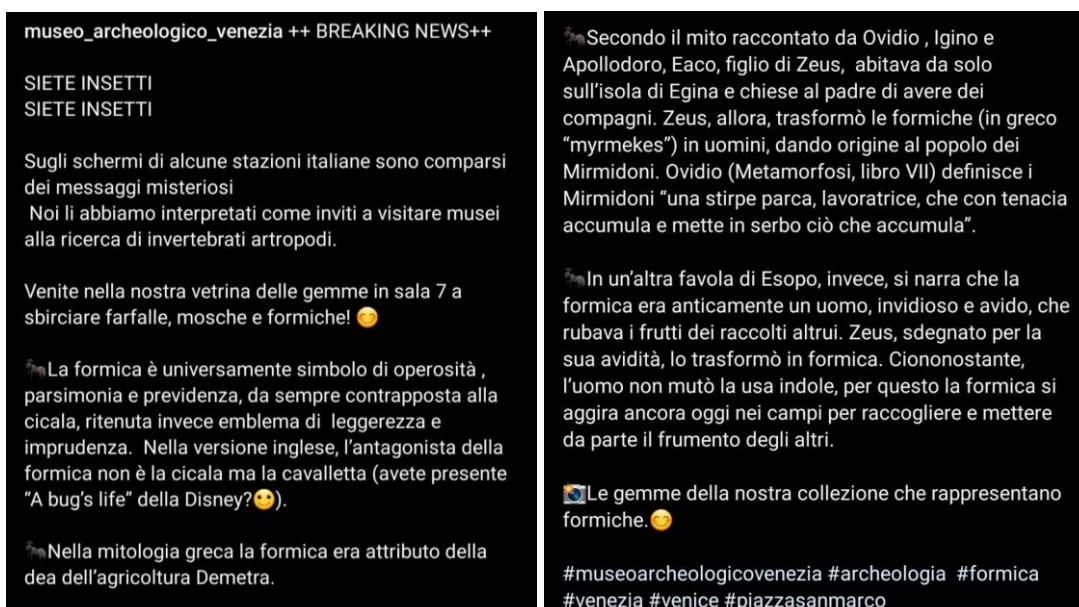Venite nella nostra vetrina delle gemme in sala 7 a sbirciare farfalle, mosche e formiche! 😊

🐜La formica è universalmente simbolo di operosità , parsimonia e previdenza, da sempre contrapposta alla cicala, ritenuta invece emblema di leggerezza e imprudenza. Nella versione inglese, l'antagonista della formica non è la cicala ma la cavalletta (avete presente "A bug's life" della Disney?😐).

🐜Nella mitologia greca la formica era attributo della dea dell'agricoltura Demetra.

🐜Secondo il mito raccontato da Ovidio , Igino e Apollodoro, Eaco, figlio di Zeus, abitava da solo sull'isola di Egina e chiese al padre di avere dei compagni. Zeus, allora, trasformò le formiche (in greco "myrmekes") in uomini, dando origine al popolo dei Mirmidoni. Ovidio (Metamorfosi, libro VII) definisce i Mirmidoni "una stirpe parca, lavoratrice, che con tenacia accumula e mette in serbo ciò che accumula".

🐜In un'altra favola di Esopo, invece, si narra che la formica era anticamente un uomo, invidioso e avido, che rubava i frutti dei raccolti altrui. Zeus, sdegnato per la sua avidità, lo trasformò in formica. Ciononostante, l'uomo non mutò la usa indole, per questo la formica si aggira ancora oggi nei campi per raccogliere e mettere da parte il frumento degli altri.

🔷Le gemme della nostra collezione che rappresentano formiche.😊

#museoarcheologicovenezia #archeologia #formica #venezia #venice #piazzasanmarco

Images 36-37. Screenshots from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page

Image 38. Screenshot from the Archaeological
Museum of Venice's Instagram page

'Ed è subito #umarell! Cosa non ci inventiamo pur di farvi venire al museo!'[15]

The term 'umarell' is a term, in the Bologna dialect, utilized to define an old person intent on observing workers doing their job on construction sites. The term was born 17 years ago and soon became popular in online contexts. In 2021 it was added to the Zanichelli Dictionary with the definition of an old man in pension wondering, usually with their hands behind their back checking out construction sites and asking workers questions and giving them suggestions on their work (https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/articoli/parole/Umarell.html). This phrase relies on 'personal and community-based humor' (Romell and Segedi, 2022) since the audience needs to be familiar with the term to understand the message. By

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[15] English Translation: And it's immediately #umarell! What won't we invent just to make you come to the museum!

utilizing this specific term, in dialect, and deeply linked to the Italian culture, it is clear that the target for this post are the Italian people. They are also the only people able to understand the meaning of the term and the connection with the picture presented in the post (image 40). In the picture, they show the process of preparing the statue for an exhibition. The museum is presenting a live exhibition and comparing it to a construction site with a curator working on it. The aim of this post is to promote a new exhibit about the goddess Artemide, and for this occasion, a sculpture depicting the goddess will be hosted in the museum. In this case, the incongruity-resolution revolves around the comparison between the work to prepare an exhibition supervised by a curator and a construction site controlled by 'umarell'.

Images 39-40. *Screenshot from the Archaeological Museum of Venice's Instagram page*

CHAPTER FIVE

General Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 General Discussion

The results of the Discourse Analysis conducted with Gee's Toolkit (2014), which was applied to the Instagram pages of the British Museum and the Archaeological Museum of Venice, suggest a thoughtful use of communication strategies to engage their audience. While using similar techniques, the two museums present different approaches toward the audience overall. The British Museum seems slightly more focused on following social trends and utilizing a language that resonates with young audiences. The Archaeological Museum of Venice also follows Internet trends, however, there is less need for knowledge of Internet culture and some posts' captions are rather long. These findings could be connected to the Archaeological Museum of Venice not specifically targeting a young audience.

By considering studies conducted on humor and its impact on social media and society, in particular Speck (1991), Romell and Segedi (2022), and Gulas and Weinberger (1992), it was possible to analyze the humorous part of the captions.

Starting with the Fill In tool, it was noticed how both museums' accounts took some information for granted. In most cases, this aspect regarded the knowledge of internet culture and trends, without which it would be difficult to fully grasp the humorous message of the post. This gives us information about the target audience, as we have seen young audiences are more familiar with social media and thus with current internet trends (Giaccardi, 2012). For this reason, they seem to be the audience to whom this kind of content is mostly directed. Moreover, through context, it is possible to understand the nationality of the target audience. All the posts of the Archaeological Museum of Venice are written in Italian. Of the posts analysed, only in one case, they presented an English translation in the comments (the 'Museum profiles' example) and in some cases they utilized hashtags in English. This finding may be explained by the idea that they want to establish an Italian fanbase to promote their museum. This finds confirmation in what the museum's social media managers stated in their interviews as seen in Chapter Two.

The case of the British Museum is different. English is a language known to many people, being the most spoken language in the world (https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/), and it can aid them in reaching a higher number of users. Therefore, all their posts have the capacity to reach and engage with an international audience, especially a young one, and make connections to other countries' cultures, as in the case of the 'Super Bowl'.

The Identities Building Tool helped in understanding the identity and role the museums wanted to obtain through their communication. From the analysis, it is possible to notice that in all the posts there is a part of humor and a part of education. Each post, no matter the social trend it was employing or the post's topic, always found space to include and explain an artifact belonging to the museum. This pattern of results is consistent with previous literature considering humor's beneficial aspect for educational purposes (Bryan and Zillmann, 1989, Kinney, 1995, Marakos, 2014, Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015, Vassiliadis and Belenioti, 2017). In particular, it is consistent with the idea of creating a playful and informative environment regarded as a form of palatable education (Nadja-Janoszka and Sawczuk, 2020). Moreover, the findings show that other than being identified as educational institutions, museums, through their use of trends and informal language, want to be identified as safe and informal spaces in which the audience can identify themselves as well. This is also in line with studies showing the importance of social media practices, such as sharing content, and interacting with users for young people's identity formation (Giaccardi, 2012). Moreover, the promotional aim of the museums' exhibitions through humor is clear and is consistent with Kidd's (2011) study on social media frames for museums. In particular, with the marketing frame, which consists of spreading the promotion of events and exhibitions. In both accounts, there have been instances of posts asking the audience to find their museum identity (the 'Museum profiles' and the 'Bestiary of Museum visitors'). This shows the museums' connection to their audience and their wish for them to feel part of a community, that provides them with an identity, as stated by Brown (2019).

The Connections Building Tool led to the exploration of topics and themes connected to the museum's world. Usually, posts try to connect artifacts with objects

of the modern world following contemporary trends, thus trying to transform these artifacts into more relatable objects for the users. This use of connections reflects the purpose of museums, which is to narrate a story to their audience (Giaccardi, 2012). Moreover, the examples that were analysed showed that the British Museum through connections wished to make artifacts relevant and useful in the present day, while the Archaeological Museum of Venice tried to connect the museums' collections to present days' language and trends. This is in line with some studies assessing that museums' presence on social media is an opportunity for institutions to remain relevant in today's society (Russo, 2009, Veliverronena and Lepik, 2015). Moreover, this is also consistent with Ziv's study (1988), whose results explained the positive impact of relevant humor on education and learning.

The Intertextuality Tool was useful in giving insights into what kind of references museums are looking for in their daily online communication. According to the findings, the references regarded internet culture mostly, with one case of nostalgia. It is interesting to note that the references present in the texts are pretty varied, there are two cases of movies being involved: 'Barbie' and 'The Lord of the Rings'. Both are very popular and acclaimed movies, well-known to the general public. The other references are a nursery rhyme and a famous slogan which is also considered a meme. For the Intertextuality to work, the references have to be relevant to the topics of the page. In the cases mentioned, the museums picked up references that could work when connected to their collections to make the objects seem more appealing to the public. A common theme was found, probably by wanting to promote a part of the collection and finding some element in pop culture to connect to it. Relevancy is also one of the contingencies that influence the appreciation of the humorous message according to Romell and Segedi (2022).

The Significance Building Tool shaped the way in which museums wanted to give importance to certain themes. This was particularly executed by the use of emojis and hashtags, which in social media settings usually reveal the subject of the post and the main topics related to it. On some occasions, such as the 'Valentine post', the importance was given by writing some words in capital letters or repeating the same word to give it resonance. Moreover, the use of emojis signals the presence of an informal and playful tone. This is a way to highlight certain aspects of museums, and

it is consistent with studies showing that an engaging and approachable tone for museums is perceived positively by the public (Romell and Segedi, 2022). Moreover, it has been noted that communication style is very important in social media contexts, especially utilizing a human tone of voice for promotion to establish a connection with the public (Barcelos and Senecal, 2017).

The findings highlight the effort both museums put into crafting their communication strategies to achieve their objectives.

Concerning humor processes, incongruity-resolution is found in almost all of the posts except for the 'Pig Day post'. Incongruity-resolution has been described as the most employed process by advertisers and the process that helps increase users' attention more than all the other processes (Speck, 1991).

There is no instance of humorous disparagement. This is in accordance with the playful sense of community the museums wish to create, which would be invalidated by the presence of hostility and examples of laughter directed at the subject of the humor (Speck, 1991).

Regarding humor types, there have been examples of comic wit, in particular, one example of satire, and one example of sentimental humor. These results are consistent with the idea of prioritizing positive instances of humor in order to engage the public. Comic wit is considered to result in higher recall of the brand and should be used for simple advertising messages, such as promotion of events or exhibitions (Leonidas et al., 2008). The almost complete presence of comic wit resonates with the aim presented by the use of social media for cultural institutions. It also has a less negative impact on the audience than other humor types, eliciting moderate positive responses and still appearing to grasp the audience's attention (Leonidas et al., 2008).

In regard to the audience's appreciation, it is interesting to see which posts received a higher number of likes and if there are similarities in this aspect among the type of content proposed by each museum and also between the two museums. For the British Museum, the posts that were more popular are the 'Superbowl' post, the 'Live, Laugh, Love like its 300 AD' post, the 'International Pig Day' post, the 'Bees' post, and the 'Ancient recipes' post. Among these, both the 'bees' and 'Superbowl' posts relied on puns to construct their humor. These posts have in common the way in which they are able to create a link between past and present, connecting ancient artifacts to

modern trends and celebrations. In particular, the post that received the most likes is the 'Live, Laugh, Love like its 300 AD' post, relying on internet memes to successfully send their humorous message and promote an ancient artifact.

For the Archaeological Museum, the posts that received more likes are the 'Ercole' post, the 'Friendzone' post, the 'Barbie Cariatide' post, the 'International Kissing Day' post, and the 'Umarell' post. Also, in this case, there are differences between the two museums. The post with the most likes is the 'Barbie Cariatide post', this was influenced by the creative nature of the post and the timing of the publication close to the film distribution. Every post presents the will to teach something about a museum's topic in a light-hearted humorous way.

All the posts that received a higher number of likes seem to be using humor to connect culture and history. All of them utilize comic wit and a community-based type of humor except the 'Pig Day' post.

According to the results of the qualitative analysis, there have been no instances of self-deprecating humor or malicious humor. This suggests that both museums' pages do not want to create anything that does not have a humorous positive reply.

Personal and community-based humor has been found in most of the posts published by the museums. This can be considered a confirmation of the importance given to the establishment of a close community for the two profiles. The community in question is one of the museum's visitors, who are regarded as being cultured people and updated on internet culture and trends.

In some instances, the humor can be summed up in just a short line and it still manages to convey the meaning that was intended.

Moreover, in order to judge the effectiveness of humor, some circumstances also have to be taken into consideration, such as Authenticity, Relevancy and Relatability (Romell and Segedi, 2022), which can be deducted by the analysis.

Regarding Authenticity, both museums seem authentic through their use of humor in communication, since the use of humor is always linked to a higher education purpose, making them fulfill their role as cultural institutions.

Relevancy should be taken into consideration as well. According to the analysis, all the humor instances are relevant to the subject of the post, meaning that they were

selected specifically to further explain history and ancient culture and to create a relationship between past and present.

Moreover, as we have seen, the posts' content, although in some cases has a more specific target, usually tries to engage a wide audience by employing humor about pop culture, internet trends, and collective experiences. Therefore, positioning itself as a Relatable space.

However, there are a lot of examples from the two accounts that performed below average in terms of likes in the Instagram insights. Therefore, humor does not necessarily equal a successful communication strategy, but it is useful to build a stable and affectionate community and create positive emotions in the audience influencing its behavior.

5.2 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As a pilot study, this research was conducted by investigating qualitative aspects of social media texts and trying to find some common patterns.

Since these findings are a result of a qualitative analysis, they cannot be considered absolute or enough to establish a certain conclusion for museums' communication.

The posts investigated belong to the accounts of the Archaeological Museum of Venice (archeological themed) and the British Museum (with one of the most famous and widest collections of archaeological artifacts) and they display a significant difference in terms of followers and engagement. In the future, different kinds of museums and their use of humor in social media communications could be investigated to create a wider comparison of this type of communication.

Among the limitations of this study, is the selection of two posts from each museum utilizing Gee's Toolkit (2014). The analysis was completed following the criterion of choosing a post with a higher-than-average number of likes, and one with lower lower-than-average number of likes. For future research, there is the possibility to utilize a wider range of examples following different criteria in order to broaden the findings' discussion.

Moreover, in this study, images were only considered in relation to the text they were posted with. In the future, images could be analysed with a multimodal analysis

to understand the way they further shape the identity of institutions on social media platforms and how they boost users' engagement, especially through the analysis of memes.

Another limitation of the study is that it only takes into consideration the number of likes to investigate the level of the post's appreciation. In further research, it would be insightful to consider the number of interactions to further investigate the level of engagement.

Also, for the purpose of this thesis, only five tools were selected out of twenty-eight tools proposed by Gee (2011). It would be interesting to submit social media content to other tools, such as the Social Languages Tool or the Relationship Building Tool, to gain wider insights into the use of humor in museums' communication.

Finally, this study investigated the approach present on Instagram channels, however, there is another rapidly growing social media, TikTok. For the next studies, it would be interesting to either compare the uses of humor in the two social media or focus solely on TikTok, since it is an app that has a younger audience than Instagram and it presents content in a very quick way, showing videos which are usually only a few seconds long.

5.3 Conclusions of the Analysis

Despite the limitations of the present study mentioned above, the qualitative analysis was useful for gathering common patterns for communication in museum settings.

The results convey that both the British Museum and the Archaeological Museum of Venice employ humor to promote exhibitions, educate their audiences, and create a sense of community. There is a common idea for museums to be more attractive and persuasive to their audiences by employing humor. Moreover, the educational aim for all the posts has been noted and it manages to balance the humorous parts of the texts. The qualitative analysis was useful for gathering common patterns for communication in museum settings.

Humor did not always manage to boost engagement in social media spaces. That is to be expected, also taking into consideration the algorithm and other factors related to content posting. So, even if most users enjoy looking for humorous content, the platform can prioritize content based on various other aspects.

Overall, from the analysis, it is clear that even if it is not possible to quantify, both Instagram pages manage to engage their audience by crafting spot-on and creative posts by keeping up with current trends and utilizing an internet-friendly kind of language. Moreover, it is clear that both museums, even if with some differences, wish to be regarded as playful and safe spaces while still maintaining their authority. But most of all, they started to communicate to create a bridge between past and present and try to connect users to it and get their attention while establishing a relationship with them.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the communication strategies utilized by the social media accounts of the Archaeological Museum of Venice and the British Museum. It also aimed to expand the discourse of museums' use of humor and Internet trends in social media communication to engage their audience and reach more visitors.

A Discourse Analysis was applied to the museums' communication relying on previous literature on humor in communication (Romell and Segedi, 2022; Yu et al. 2022).

The findings of the Discourse Analysis, conducted by using Gee's (2014) toolkit on Instagram's posts, have revealed both differences and similarities in the use strategies on the social platform. Both museums tend to target people with a knowledge of humor trends and pop culture. However, the British Museum particularly targets a younger and international audience, while the Archaeological Museum of Venice's strategies mostly focus on an Italian audience. This can be traced back to the British Museum wanting to keep its international popularity and the Archaeological Museum of Venice trying to establish a local community.

By applying selected tools (the Fill In Tool, the Connections Building Tool, the Identities Building Tool, the intertextuality Tool, and the Significance Building Tool) it was possible to gain some insights into what the museums want to establish with their communication. The educational aim of the posts is clear, presenting artifacts from their collections in modern settings. Through the use of humor and internet trends, the museums manage to promote exhibitions, events, and celebrations, and also discuss current topics, in a creative and attention-grabbing way. The museums' identities are created by utilizing playful and friendly language, hashtags, and emojis connected to the topics of the post. Museums also maintain their institutional role through their artifacts sharing, aligning with Russo's (2009) analysis of social media providing relevance and authority for museums.

Moreover, they try to establish a community and an engaging relationship with their audience by directly asking for their opinions, persuading them to participate in internet trends and through calls to action. This also supports the creation of an emotional connection with the public, as mentioned by Romell and Segedi (2022) and

Vassiliadis and Belenioti (2017). Thanks to the interactive nature of social media, it is possible to have immediate feedback from the public, who become an active voice in museums' environments.

To conclude, humor can be a useful tool in museums' communications, but it does not necessarily guarantee more engagement as seen in the analysis and it could potentially not have the desired outcome. However, by combining humor and education museums can consolidate their presence in digital contexts and establish a sense of community with their audience.

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