

Instagram and Online Presence Among Art Museums
An Investigation of Instagram Content on Audience Engagement



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine how and why art museums engage with audiences on Instagram and to identify the factors that indicate a successful social media strategy. Instagram, in particular, the image-based social media platform that is suitable to present and mediate digital visual content. It offered the opportunities for the museum to mediate between communication and content-presentation in the platform that extended beyond the physical space of the museum; allowing the museum to create new experiences through their audiences' involvement and active participation. Therefore, knowing what forms of activity will be most effective, and what prompts the audience to engage are all crucial to the success of social media activity in the museum sector. While previous studies have focused on the consumer perception of the social media usage among museums, little attention has been paid to how museums implement social media effectively. The research question is: *How do museums communicate through Instagram and to what extent does an Instagram account reflect the institutional objectives to engage with the audience?* This thesis is conducted on the basis of qualitative content analysis, by analyzing and interpreting the contents from three of the prominent art museums in the Netherland: the Rijksmuseum, the Stedelijk Museum and the Van Gogh Museum. The analysis not only revealed the specific characteristics that varied between the museums, but also the importance of Instagram in terms of audience engagement. In addition, three emerging themes demonstrate the objectives of museums on Instagram, namely, enabling digital consumption of artworks; taste formation and education, and public image of the museum. All in all, three museums show some common tendencies to engage with its audience, while the effectiveness of the strategy comes to how they can manage to catch on the attention of the audience and stimulate them to interact.

Keywords: Instagram, social media, audience engagement, museum, online presence

Table of Contents

Abstract and Keywords

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.1. <i>Taste Formation</i>	9
2.2. <i>Digital Museum Consumption</i>	10
2.3. <i>Participatory Culture</i>	12
2.4. <i>Marketing in the Museum Context</i>	14
2.5. <i>Marketing Art Museum in Social Media</i>	16
2.6. <i>Representation Theory</i>	18
3. Research Design.....	20
3.1. <i>Methodology</i>	20
3.2. <i>Sample</i>	21
3.3. <i>Data Analysis</i>	23
4. Results and Discussion.....	27
4.1. <i>Specific Characteristics Found (Per Museum)</i>	27
4.2. <i>Enabling Digital Consumption of the Artworks</i>	31
4.3. <i>Taste Formation and Education</i>	33
4.4. <i>Public Image of the Museum</i>	35
4.5. <i>Audience Engagement</i>	37
4.6. <i>Determinant That Influence Audience Engagement</i>	39
5. Conclusion.....	42
5.1. <i>Limitations and Implications for Further Research</i>	44
References.....	46
Appendix A.....	50
Appendix B.....	53
Appendix C.....	59

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades, museums have adopted different types of technology to organize, catalog, and communicate facts about their collections (López, Margapoti, Maragliano and Bove, 2010). The recent development of a new generation of Internet-based applications, known as Web 2.0 social media, has created new prospects for museums to communicate and interact with the public (Kotler, 2001; Proctor, 2010; Kidd, 2011). According to López et al. (2010) 93% of museums in the developed countries has adopted social media in their communication strategies. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), for example, has one of the most active social media approaches in the museums sector with 3,3 million followers on Instagram, 5,24 million followers on Twitter, and 2 million likes on Facebook.

With the growing popularity of social media, there are an increasing number of research projects and studies aimed at describing and analyzing the specific ways in which Web 2.0 tools may be used by museums (López et al., 2010). However, most of the research on social media usage in the museum sector tends to focus on the consumer side. Although a number of museums have started utilizing social media as part of their marketing strategies, there is as of yet little information regarding effective implementation of marketing strategies in social media (Fletcher and Lee, 2012). The importance of such research is necessary for the growing body of technological innovation processes in the cultural sector (Padilla-Meléndez and Águila-Obra, 2013).

As cultural institutions, museums are called on to be attentive to visitors' needs and to make heritage objects accessible to a public, bridging the gap between them (ICOM, 2006). In addition to acquiring, safeguarding, conserving, and showcasing artefacts and artworks, museums increasingly play an educational role in their community interactions (ICOM, 2006). The museum and its collections become the center of knowledge building based on the discussion, exchange and collaboration of many actors such as artists, curator, critics and visitors (López et al., 2010). This process serves as a foundation of the arts and the wider creative sector, by "nurturing and advancing culture at local, national and international levels and creating significant public value" (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012, pp.206).

Social media provides a unique way of fulfilling the museum's duty through enhanced interactivity between the museum and its audience on the one hand, and technological convergence on the other hand, allowing consumers to access the collections at any time, from any place, and in any form (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012). It allows the museum to create new experiences and learning opportunities through their audiences' involvement and active participation. Moreover, Kotler (2011) argues that social media serve as an extension of a physical museum; it takes art outside the museum walls and onto a space where everyone could participate.

Moreover, social media prompted the shift towards multi-directional many-to-many communication and is seen to result in strategy that is based on the 'conversation' rather than the lecture (Kidd, 2011). Collaboration and co-production has increasingly become a prominent frame of social media initiatives within the museum sector. One of the claims that is being made about social media is that it helps build and sustain communities of interest around the museum (Kidd, 2011). Exploring and emphasizing this potential is thus a key part of the strategy to engage the audience on social media.

Instagram is a social media mobile-application platform launched in October 2010 and has gained much popularity since then, surpassing Twitter in terms of number of users and time spent on the application (Russmann and Svensson, 2016). It offers the user a unique way to share photos and videos and apply different editing tools (filters). In addition to posting and manipulating contents, Instagram also provides similar social connectivity as other social media channels. Users can connect with each other by 'following', and they can 'like' and comment on the posts. It also allows users to add captions and hashtags (#) to describe the photos and videos, and tag or mention other users by using the @ symbol before posting them (Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati, 2014).

Instagram was chosen as a subject for the study because this image-based social media platform is particularly popular at this moment due to the widespread of smartphone. The adoption of Instagram among museums is significant because it signals a mobile, image-centered, and organic mode of sharing their collections which differs qualitatively from professional photography in the support of the traditional form of communication (McNely, 2012). Instagram allows for the digital 'curation' of content in

which museums can present the desired images directly to the audience, interacting from their personal device and without the need to 'visit' the museum. This serves as a means for explaining differences in meaning and activity of online participation (Hogan, 2010).

This thesis considers the role of Instagram in art institutions, with particular reference to art museums, for the following reasons: First, social media are primary drivers of change in cultural consumption, therefore, marketing strategies in museums are likely to look particularly to the use of social media in dealing with their audiences (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012). Second, social media have the potential to allow the arts and art institutions to increase audiences and their level of engagement (Hume, 2011; Hausmann, 2012). Third, since museums' digital presence is no longer confined to its website, controlling increasingly less of the information published about its collections, "making it necessary that they find ways to reinvent their strategies to capitalize on the opportunities and avoid the threats that the new environment brings" (Proctor, 2010, pp.36).

The aim of this thesis is to examine how and why art museums engage with audiences on Instagram and to identify the factors that indicate an effective Instagram presence. This is achieved through the investigation of the official Instagram accounts of selected museums in the Netherlands and their social media strategies, by discovering patterns and characteristics of their contents on Instagram as well as the success of such contents in terms of audience interaction and engagement. Results will present and illustrate the practical implications of social media in the museum sector while reflecting on the existing literature.

Research question: How do museums communicate through Instagram and to what extent does an Instagram account reflect the institutional objectives to engage with the audience?

The social media content reflects the museum's values and ideologies in which they want to present to the public. According to Padilla-Meléndez and Águila-Obra (2013), the use of social media by museums has been categorized into three organizational frames: marketing, inclusivity, and collaboration. The first, seeks to promote the face of the institution; the second develops a community; and the last, promotes collaboration with the

audience. Through social media, museums try to make use of the audience's networks to promote and distribute their services (Hausmann, 2012). Beyond increasing the general exposure, social media allows for museums to develop a deep and meaningful relationship with the audience (Wong, 2011).

However, the effective use of social media requires time and commitment; if accounts are set up but not properly managed, the audience will quickly lose interest and their involvement will become passive at best (Fletcher & Lee, 2012). Although social media only requires Internet access and therefore is relatively inexpensive, it ties up human resources to constantly maintain and update the content feed. Therefore, knowing what forms of activity will be most effective, and what prompts the audience to engage are all crucial to the success of social media activity in the museum (Kidd, 2011).

Sub-question: What determinants influence audience engagement on the museum's Instagram posts?

The sub-research question seeks to investigate the relationship between the type of images posted and the number of reactions that it receives. According to McNely (2012), Instagram leverages many of the key affordances of other popular social media platforms such as the timeline, liking and commenting features, and asymmetric follower relationships. It often acts as pivots for social interaction between the user and organizations. This study characterizes the effectiveness of Instagram based on the amount of likes and comments received from the audience. It indicates that the contents from the museum were able to catch on the attention of the audience and stimulate them to interact.

This study has clear relevance for the museum sector as it discusses strategies to address social media more efficiently, in particular useful for marketing managers because it provides them with new insights on the implication of Instagram in the museum branding strategy. Similarly, galleries and other cultural institutions may find results useful to understand the dynamics of interacting with the public when publishing art images on social media. This research is relevant to the academic world as the study on Instagram usage in museums has been largely ignored, particularly for disciplines of museum management,

digital and visual communication, and art marketing.

The following section of the thesis is structured as follows: chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework which discusses the concept of taste formation, digital museum consumption, participatory culture, marketing in the museum context, marketing on social media, and the representation theory. Chapter 3 includes the description of the methodology used in this research as well as the detail of the data collection and analysis process. Afterwards, chapter 4 presents the results in specific cases and common themes that emerged during the analysis. The last chapter concludes the main findings and the limitations of this research and implications for further research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 *Taste Formation*

Arts are often said to be a cultivated taste (McCain 2003; Lévy-Garboua and Montmarquette, 2011). Meaning that, the taste for art is either acquired or developed through the increasing consumption and exposure over time. Sociologists emphasize the intersection of culture and consumption and the importance of tastes in shaping the cultural positions, preferences, and behaviours (Katz-Gerro, 2004; Warde, 2008). The taste is unknown and every new experience of a given art form reveals to the consumer an unexpected positive or negative increment in their taste for it (Lévy-Garboua and Montmarquette, 2011).

The cultivation of taste is further empathized in the theory of learning by consuming. According to Lévy-Garboua and Montmarquette (2011), we are not aware of our true taste and supposed to discover it through experiences and unsystematic learning when consuming repeatedly. However, not only we constructed our taste from what we see, but rather 'what we see with' (Meyer, 2000). Taste is often negotiated in a local process, heavily influenced by the operating institutional context and the available rhetoric and classifications (Katz-Gerro, 2004). The dominant rhetoric can influence taste-making process by steering the collective imagination and interpretation one way or another (Meyer, 2000).

Scholars such as Meyer (2000) and Warde (2008) argue that participation and exchange in the cultural industries and cultural institutions contribute to the taste-making process. "In the formation of taste, changes in the way in which public and private institutions process and promote cultural products are absolutely central" (Warde, 2008, pp.327). Moreover, Meyer's (2000) analysis of the processes involved in the creation of cultural value (in music and classical theatre) contributed to an understanding on the impact of institutional context on taste-making. He argued that taste is negotiated by the collective actors through rhetoric and institutions.

Moreover, there is a long-standing notion that the perception of art differs from the perception of other general objects (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008). It is likely that many will

have different opinions but consumers do possess a general conception and taste in art. (McCain, 2003). While acknowledging that part of the richness and attractiveness of art lies in the power to 'disturb and arouse' individuals, "this subjectivity and variability is based on a commonality, which is ultimately linked to social knowledge." (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008, pp.380).

Furthermore, many scholars have agreed on the emergence of a cultural hierarchy (Levine 1988; Shrum 1996, in Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008). Within arts, there are categories that extend between two extreme poles labelled as highbrow - lowbrow, high culture - pop culture, or legitimate taste - inferior taste (Holbrook, 1999). Museums recognize arts as legitimate and distinguish one form of art from another. As such, a visit to museums is perceived as highbrow and enhances one's knowledge that contributes to their cultural capital. At the end, the taste for art is a product of history reproduced by education (Bourdieu, 1984).

The taste in art is cumulative; each new experience appears in the trajectory of consumption, and each exposure permits consumers to establish relationships with the objects (Chen, 2008). Cultural institutions, such as the museum, have played a big role in taste formation process as they recognize and legitimize the cultural values that contribute to society's taste (Warde, 2008; Meyer, 2000). Instagram can play an important role in the taste-making process as it allows museums to present their knowledge and facilitate the exchange and flow of information, furthering social taste in the digital realm. Moreover, it allows museums to expand their reach; the more museum content individuals consume, the more they will develop a taste for artworks.

2.2 Digital Museum Consumption

Art consumption can have two modalities: possession and access to the product (Chen, 2008). A painting can be consumed by possession or through the experience of accessing it. In the museum sector, possession is reflected in the collection (purchase) while access is reflected in the exhibition visits (access experience). The goal of the museum has been largely subordinated to enhancing visitors' cultural consumption experience (Jafari, Taheri and vom Lehn, 2013). Within this body of knowledge, museums have been generally

conceptualised as “public consumption spaces where visitors benefit from a variety of experiences such as aesthetic appreciation, education, and recreation [...]” through the ‘visual consumption’ of exhibits (Jafari et al., 2013, pp. 1731).

The idea of museum experience has shifted from aesthetics, visualization, and education to a more direct, immediate happening (Hausmann, 2012). One observable trend is the increase in sociable and participatory experiences, and the museum’s relationship with its community (Kotler, 2001). A second trend is a movement away from the traditional museum model toward being part of other cultural activities (such as hosting non-art events, collaboration, programs outside the museum). “These trends pointed toward experiencing a variety of cultural elements together, formal and informal, rather than pursuing disparate and isolated cultural institutions” (Kotler, 2001, pp.418). Audiences’ expectations are changing and museums have to adapt their approach to the public (Stein, 2012). Part of this adaptation is to make their collection information available on the Internet.

Nowadays, the experience of cultural consumption does not only bound to the physical space of the museum. “Museums that seek to broaden and deepen their visitors have positioned collections where the consumers are: online” (Navarrete and Borowiecki, 2016, pp. 234). Technological innovation, along with changes in the conceptualisation of “visitor” have a profound influence across the cultural sector, leading institutions to connect and engage with their visitors through websites, online collections, and social media channels (Kidd, 2011; Navarrete and Borowiecki, 2016). Such technologies take the museum outside of its physical bounds, recognising and even embracing subjectivity (Kidd, 2011).

A digital information gallery at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, represents a movement away from the tangible objects and the growing role of narrative, interpretative and contextual meaning of the artworks (Kotler, 2011). At the Brooklyn Museum, *Click!: A Crowd-Curated Exhibition* in 2008 gave the public the job of ranking photographs for the display through the exhibition’s website (Proctor, 2010). These examples show that online presence has become a growing element of cultural consumption. Museums are eager to engage younger people to balance the aging population of existing members and donors (Kotler, 2011). These participatory and sociable

experiences, “are signs that museums are expanding their boundaries, going beyond their walled enclaves” (Kotler, 2011, pp.418).

The care and creation of knowledge has always been central to the mission of museums, and continues to be so (Stein, 2012). However, with the ubiquitous access to information on the Internet, museums are no longer the only producers of content related to the objects they collect. A significant amount of content about museums can be found on digital channels including commercial websites, blogs, and Wikipedia (Kidd, 2011; Stein, 2012; Navarrete and Borowiecki, 2016). The online presence of museums could also be a way to take back control of the narrative and interpretation (Procter, 2010; Kidd, 2011). To a certain extent, it is the museum’s responsibility to communicate with remote audiences who may never be able to visit the physical museum in person (Procter, 2010).

This perspective is central to our contemporary society, where consumers are presented with multiple options and experience opportunities without the obligation to possess the product (Chen, 2008). Museums need to adapt to these new modes of consumption, as Kotler (2001) observed the trends for museums to be more accessible and involved in the community. This research proposes that access (experience) is also achievable through the online presence of the artwork. By enhancing interactivity between art and audience on social networks and websites, allowing audiences to access cultural experiences in any time and place (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012).

2.3 Participatory Culture

The emergence of social media in the museum sector stems from the rapid development of Web 2.0, a digital tool that allows users to develop and contribute to web-based content (Fletcher and Lee, 2012). Museums have been compelled to introduce the alternative visitor experiences through the use of social media (Holdgaard and Klastrup, 2014). By doing so, they enter the dialogue with the public by engaging and empowering their audiences to participate (Russo, Watkins, Kelly and Chan, 2008), transforming them from passive observer into active participant. Moreover, the ability for social media to encourage participation can foster and strengthen relationship with the audience (Fletcher and Lee, 2012).

This phenomenon reflected the shift in the paradigm and “the reformulation and rethinking of the museum institution which has affected the articulations and definitions of the institutional values, governance, strategies and communication ideologies of the concrete museums” (Holdgaard and Klastrup, 2014, pp.191). The move towards multi-directional many-to-many communication is seen to result in communication modelled upon the “conversation” rather than the lecture; “dialogic, democratic, and free of barriers to entry” (Kidd, 2011, pp.65). Museum audiences are now bringing expectations for participation as they visit the museum both physically and virtually (Stein, 2012).

With the rise of participatory culture, expectations of the general public to be able to share their thoughts and ideas about museums and their collections are changing (Stein, 2012). It seems that a conceptual shift is necessary to reconcile these seemingly contradictory intentions: “to democratize control of and access to culture while preserving and valuing the subject expert and a traditional curatorial role” (Procter, 2010, pp.35). The ‘official’ accounts of the museum could be seen as the effort to balance out these forces by closely monitor the interaction and providing authentic narrative.

The reproducibility of the digital media raised the concern over ‘authenticity’ of objects and rendering museums obsolete; it is also threatening their control over content and context as information is dispersed and ‘remixed’ (Wong, 2011). Wong (2011) addressed the ethics of social media outreach for museums in terms of both tension and synergy. She concluded that the participatory nature of the public space of social media, as well as its persistence and anonymity, raises concerns because of misinformation, hateful speech, and unauthorized re-distribution of the contents.

This research proposes that social media is central to the process of audience engagement. The opportunities afforded by the changing expectations are resulting in a series of choices that museums will need to make regarding whether or not they will embrace social media; “Whether the museum will determine that there is inherent value in the opinions and interests of their invested communities or the conversational engagement with their audiences regarding the nature, origins, and personal interpretations of their collections [...], what remains to be seen is how such a co-ownership of interpretation resolves itself in the life of the museum” (Stein, 2012, pp.220).

2.4 Marketing in the Museum Context

Most museums are non-profit organizations; their role is to collect and conserve the artefacts, and to educate the public, for the public good (Hume, 2011). It is no surprise that they usually are supported by the state or by corporations seeking social investment and sponsorship (Hume, 2011). Museums compete with other museums and art institutions to attract audiences as well as with other providers of entertainment and recreational leisure products (Kotler, 2011; Hausmann, 2012). According to Cole (2008), there are two major forces leading museums to proactively engage with marketing activity. First is the need to generate enough visitors to justify government funding and to improve financial sustainability. Second is the need to become more consumer-oriented: “to place public service at the core of the educative mission, and to realize this goal through strategies that reflect the needs and preferences of the current and potential audiences” (Cole, 2008, pp.177).

For museums, marketing instruments traditionally comprises such tools as “posters, flyers, advertisements, sales promotion measures, direct marketing and increasingly, websites” (Hausmann, 2012, pp.32). In this era of the internet (especially social media), word of mouth (WOM) marketing is gaining recognition in effectiveness as a mean of referral, making it possible to reach countless numbers of people (Hausmann, 2012). It is crucial for the museum to focus on visitor orientation and to ensure consistently high-quality service at each visitor contact point in order to achieve their satisfaction (Kotler, 2011). The potential visitor often relates to the various additional services provided by the museum such as website and social media (Hausmann, 2012).

Several studies have shown that experience and trust characteristics has a substantial impact on the assessment possibilities and the information-seeking behaviour of consumers (Hume, 2011; Hausmann, 2012). Museums service is a good example of experience goods, meaning that it possesses high search costs (Hutter, 2011). In that sense, the information about the products is crucial to eliminate uncertainties. Consumers often rely on the reputation and image of the museum or on the opinions of others. “Referral by friends and acquaintances are especially effective in reducing uncertainty among visitors, especially the first-time or occasional visitors with little museum experience.” (Hausmann,

2012, pp.34).

More specific to the marketing strategy for developing existing audiences is perhaps the level of satisfaction experienced and the kind of benefit consumers have derived from the museum services, factors which will affect their future decisions (Hausmann, 2012). Moreover, the post-consumption phase is important as museums need to know the extent to which they succeed in encouraging people to come back, or not (Kawashima, 1998; Hume, 2011). As Cole (2008) argued, successful museum marketing practice not only attracts more visitors, but takes into the account of raising visitors' commitment, targeting local/regional communities, education segments and cultural tourists, diversification and contributing to the museum as a brand.

After all, museums service possessed the characteristics of the experience goods which contains "regularly varied information" (Hutter, 2011, pp.214). Experiences in this term means the experiments to discover information about the products, once attained, will lead to stable choices (Hutter, 2011). Therefore, marketing activities serve the agenda to generate visitor and be more customer-oriented (Cole, 2008). It is important for them to ensure relationships and high-quality services in every contact point to achieve satisfaction of the experience. In the age of social media, 'word of mouth' and referrals are the greatest tool in marketing signalling qualities of the museum.

This research takes into account the measure employed by museums to encourage referral behaviour among audiences with focus on Instagram, which can encourage word of mouth among past and potential visitors. Given that that competition for user attention is growing, appropriate virtual communication and interaction situation must be created (Hausmann, 2012). Instagram meets the technical requirement necessary to "give access to as many users as possible, facilitate passing of information and support interaction" (Hausmann, 2012, pp.37).

2.5 Marketing Art Museums in Social Media

According to Bakhshi and Throsby (2012) every choice of the use of new media technologies has its objectives. They proposed five different dimensions that can be used to justify the use of social media in the museum sector. The first objective is related to the artistic quality, the second to making their output available to as many consumers as possible. The third objective related to education, especially of younger people or to enhance the learning experience of consumers generally. Fourth, the objectives relating to knowledge, research and informational functions in the field and, lastly, the objectives relating to social goal and local community. The pursuit of all the above objectives provides additional information to the consumer, which influences their decision toward the museum's services in one way or another.

Marketing strategies linked firmly to the museum's mission can provide a framework that allows them to fulfil their core activities and to sustain themselves (Cole, 2008). Many museums have adopted social media in their marketing strategy; due to the relatively low cost for implementing and maintaining, social media is an effective tool that can reach large amount of audiences (Labrecque, Markos and Milne, 2011). "Social media sites are increasingly being charged with the task of giving museums a recognisable face; seen as an extension of their branding activity" (Kidd, 2011, pp. 68). Social media marketing comprises web-based applications that enable networking, interaction and thus, building of relationships with the user (Hausmann, 2012). According to Hausmann (2012), typical social media applications are knowledge communities (e.g. Wikipedia), content communities (e.g. Youtube), social networks (e.g. Facebook), visual platforms (e.g. Instagram) and (micro)blogs (e.g. Twitter).

Museums and art galleries have increasingly used the image-based social network sites such as Instagram to share part of their collection to the public (Weilenmann, Hillman and Jungselius 2012). The use of image, as opposed to mere text, enables higher levels of engagement with consumers and allows more interactions than other types of content (Roncha and Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Some of their marketing strategies also involve museums using Instagram accounts to promote activities or offer behind the scenes views of their institutions (Weilenmann et al., 2012). These initiatives are very important in

building the supporter loyalty. Visitors need to understand the museum, knowing what it stands for, in order to be able to identify with those causes and values, or not (Cole, 2008).

Moreover, Instagram photo taking has been defined as a new visitor practice in art exhibitions (Weilenmann et al., 2012). “This includes crowdsourcing actions of correcting, contextualizing, complementing, co-curating of photographic historical content that increase the quality of museum collection” (Weilenmann et al., 2012, pp.305). Instagram seems especially well suited as a mediating tool in the museum sector, since images carry so much meaning and provide visual experience that is central to the art. However, alongside these opportunities are the ethical challenges of working within a turbulent environment that tends to value a casual voice and tolerate a large degree of noise (Wong, 2011).

In the fashion marketing research, brands typically use two strategies on Instagram. The first one, emotion strategy, concentrates on influencing affective beliefs, associating with emotions felt; second, symbolism strategy, is applied when a brand needs to convey a certain identity focusing on the brand’s image (Roncha and Radclyffe, 2016). It has proven to be “an effective way of connecting brands and consumers with 53 percent of Instagram users following their favourite brands, more than any of the other main social platforms” (Roncha and Radclyffe, 2016, pp.306). Apart from following brands, users also search on the products they are interested in (Abidin, 2016).

Social media has been a useful tool in the market strategies for its ability to reach and engage a wide range of audiences. Instagram, in particular, has gained popularity in the art sector by being a visual-based platform. In fashion marketing, Instagram has improved the quality and visibility of the advertorials (Abidin, 2016; Roncha and Radclyffe, 2016). Instagram also seems especially well suited with the museum sector, on one hand, to inform the public and hence nurture potential visitors, and on the other hand, to build and maintain relationships with consumers and convert them into advocates for marketing.

2.6 Representation Theory

It is important to look at the role of museums in the production of social knowledge. Museums exist in order to “acquire, safeguard, conserve, and display objects, artefacts and works of arts” (Hall, 2011, pp.155). The museum consists of many systems of representation; many contested entities which establish systems that confer meaning and validity that is in line with specific or articulated discourses (Hall, 2011). Their messages appeal to the collective view of the public, since their survival depends on making the collection, the exhibition and the museum need to be meaningful to their audiences. (Hall, 2011).

Hall (2011) suggested two noticeable characteristics of museum objects – their physical presence and their meaning. Museums are about objects, or more specifically systems of representation that produce meaning through the display of objects and how objects, texts and contexts have combined to produce a message. The presentation of objects and the power it exerts depend on the manner in which the objects work in conjunction with contexts and texts to produce meaning (Hall, 2011). In an exhibition, the meaning is produced through the curation and ordering of the separate but also related components (Hall, 2011).

The popular perception of curatorial practice can be adapted to how objects are represented on social media. The contents on social media are carefully curated in order to be displayed in the form of ‘virtual exhibition’. The Instagram account serves the same goal as the exhibition as to articulate objects, texts, and visual representations to create an intricate and bounded representational system. It takes the museum outside of its physical boundary, and, in their virtuality and immateriality, begins to put the story at the centre stage; recognising and embracing subjectivity (Kidd, 2011).

In the past, the problems of representation of visual media were confined to specialized image databases and limited to only professional applications. The development of new media technologies has put content processing of visual media central to the process of representation (Aigrain, Zhang and Petkovic, 1996). The mobile devices and social media have impact on the proliferation of social photography which has become embedded in our

everyday life (Zappavigna, 2016). Visual choices that are made in images on social media construct the relationships between the object represented, the photographer, and the audience (Zappavigna, 2016). This research proposes that way in which the images were presented contributes to its ability to engage audiences. The contents posted is considered the key criterion for the success of social media. However, the contents should not be arbitrary; it must offer clear value added (Hausmann, 2012).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Methodology

This thesis is conducted on the basis of content analysis. This method is the most appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore the underlying patterns and details. As this study aims to address museums' social media (Instagram) strategies, qualitative content analysis is suitable for the analysis of the photographs on the premise that a picture is worth a thousand words, and a photograph tells a story (Smith and Sanderson, 2016). Content analysis is an "unobtrusive and nonreactive method commonly used by social researchers and applied to all types of media content" (Smith and Sanderson, 2015, pp.348).

Content analysis focuses on coding visuals and connecting relevant segments together (Russman and Svensson, 2016). To characterize the types of contents posted on Instagram, a grounded approach was employed to thematize and code. The categories were derived inductively by observing the patterns and characteristics that frequently occur and relating it back to the core theory. The goal of this study is to connect the emerged patterns to the existing theories, not to create a new theory. During the analysis of the data, the similarities and differences between the museums became clear, which later came together to form the topics which answer how museums communicate through Instagram.

Coming up with good meaningful content categories is known to be challenging, especially for images since they contain much richer features than text (Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati, 2014). Therefore, it is also important to investigate the texts that accompanied the visual contents. Captions, hashtags, and user-tags were also included in the analysis. On Instagram, the verbal text often complemented the visual imagery (Smith and Sanderson, 2015). Thus, a textual analysis was employed to discover themes and patterns that emerged from the use of captions and accompanied texts on museums' Instagram photos. It allows for this research to capture the context of images and videos and how it seeks to engage with the audience.

The analysis procedure consists of three main stages of coding: open, axial and selective. The first step, open coding, allows the researcher to retrieve and document the

observation into codes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Afterwards, these open codes were carefully investigated and the relationships between them examined. The codes that repeat themselves were organized into categories. In the process of axial coding, it is important to investigate the possible existing patterns and narrow the clusters down as much as possible (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The result is the selective codes which finalize the meaningful patterns to answer the research questions. Software for analysis was employed for the coding process, namely ATLAS TI- a program that is suitable for in-depth and analytical approaches to qualitative data. The software allows for the analysis of visual contents and supporting text through the creation of codes and code families (Mayring, 2014).

While a qualitative method is the most appropriate approach to discuss emerging patterns in details, there are several drawbacks due to the choice of sample and overall data collection. Picking museums from different cities would have broadened the scope and representation of the sample. However, the museums selected have outstanding social media strategies worth study, are all art museums representing different art forms and art movements, and are all located in the same city of Amsterdam. Selection criteria gave priority to diversity in style and behavior of using social media.

3.2 Sample

The official Instagram account of the Rijksmuseum (@rijksmuseum), the Stedelijk Museum (@stedelijkmuseum) and the Van Gogh Museum (@vangoghmuseum) are chosen as the subject of this study. These three museums were picked specifically because they are among the most visited art museums in the Netherlands (Statista, 2018). It is important to note that this research will only include art museums; other highly visited museums in the Netherlands such as Anne Frank House and Sexmuseum are not included in the analysis. Moreover, the sample also possessed active Instagram accounts with substantial amounts of followers which is important to receive a meaningful result. To be more specific, during the period of data collection, the Rijksmuseum has 199,000 followers and 847 posts, the Stedelijk Museum has 101,000 followers and 911 posts, and the Van Gogh Museum has 698,000 followers and 1,198 posts.

The Rijksmuseum is located in the Amsterdam Museumplein, close to the Stedelijk

Museum and the Van Gogh Museum. The Rijksmuseum first opened its doors in 1800 under the name 'Nationale Kunstgalerij' in The Hague. In 1808, the museum moved to Amsterdam, where it was based in the Royal Palace on Dam Square (Rijksmuseum.nl, n.d.). The current building was put into use in 1885 (Rijksmuseum.nl, n.d.). As the collections continue to grow and expand, the Rijksmuseum building has gone through many changes. The most recent renovation reinstated the original Cuypers structure which took 10 years to complete (The Economist, 2013). Paintings, applied art, and historical objects are no longer displayed in separate parts of the building, but in a single chronological circuit that tells the story of Dutch art and history (Rijksmuseum.nl, n.d.). The Rijksmuseum was home to many valuable masterpieces from the Dutch Golden Age such as the works of Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Frans Hals. It was known for the vast collection comprising of 1 million objects, including a small collection of Asian art (Rijksmuseum.nl, n.d.).

The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam is a museum for modern and contemporary art, opened in 1895 as an initiative of both public and private individuals. The museum continuously presents dynamic exhibitions by a young generation of artists. Its commitment to developing relationships with young and emerging artists shapes the identity of the museum's collection (Stedelijkmuseum.nl, n.d.). For almost nine years the Stedelijk Museum was closed for the public as it underwent major reconstruction (Cohen, 2012). As a result, the museum started the innovative project "Stedelijk goes to Town" in 2008 to maintain a visual presence while the building was being renovated. The project features activities such as workshops, lectures, and presentations in various locations throughout Amsterdam. The Stedelijk Museum exhibits works from artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Malevich, and Barnett Newman. The Stedelijk Museum's collection contains about 90,000 artworks, dating from 1870 to the present (Stedelijkmuseum.nl, n.d.).

Lastly, the Van Gogh Museum is an art museum dedicated to the works of Vincent van Gogh. The museum hosts the largest collection of Van Gogh's paintings and drawings in the world (Vangoghmuseum.nl, n.d.). It comprises of 200 paintings, 400 drawings, and 700 letters. The museum opened in 1973 from the collection inherited by Van Gogh's nephew Vincent Willem van Gogh that were eventually transferred to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (Vangoghmuseum.nl, n.d.). The museum also features art works by Van Gogh's

contemporaries from the Impressionist and Post-impressionist movement such as Monet, Édouard Manet, and Paul Gauguin.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data was collected on 3 May 2018 to include the 90 most recent posts from each museum's Instagram account. The period of the posts ranges from December 2017 to early May 2018. This was intended to investigate the recent trends as well as the changes and progress through various months. Each museum is considered as a separate case. In total, 270 Instagram posts including photos and videos composed the data set. This substantial dataset provides insight to how museums communicate through Instagram and to what extent does an Instagram account reflect their institutional objectives to engage with the audience.

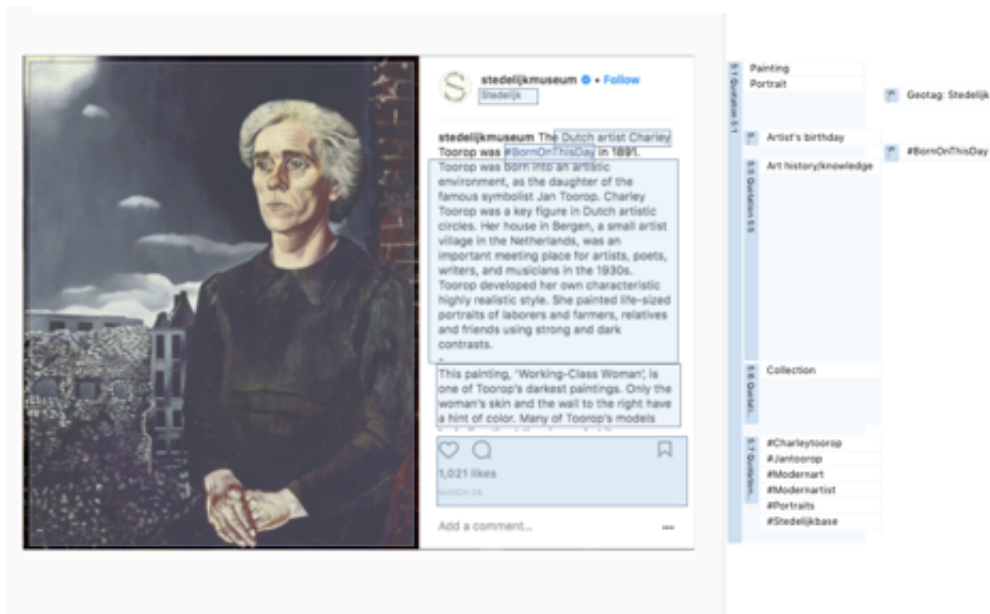
The Instagram contents were captured in a screenshot and were organized chronologically for analysis. Selection of posts was based on the criteria that only the information uploaded by the museum onto the official Instagram account were analyzed. This research did not study the use of images posted in other Instagram accounts without the authority from the museum, which happens often. Other components such as Instagram stories or ad features were excluded from this research. In order to contextualize the Instagram posts and to support the analysis, additional data were gathered from the museum's websites such as information about exhibitions and the museum's collection. For the sub-research question, the researcher collected the amount of likes and comments to see which are the three most popular posts per museum. The data were then re-grouped to analyze the determinants that influence audience engagement on the museums' Instagram posts.

The unit of analysis is the single post on the Instagram account. Each post includes a picture/video, caption, likes and comments. This analysis only includes the number of likes and comments, but not the content of the comments. The content of each Instagram posting was coded on a variety of content-related characteristics. The codebook developed by Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016) and Smith and Sanderson (2016) provided a useful tool to analyze the visual media contents. The following variables were included: museum's

name, date when the content was uploaded, number of likes, number of comments, photo caption, user tags (@), hashtags (#), the main subject of the content.

The posts were first coded by overall content and category: artwork, building, people or other. Images/videos featuring the artwork were subjected to more detailed analysis. The posts that contained artworks were categorized based on the form of art, the artists who executed the work and whether the object belongs to the museum, an additional variable was coded to describe which exhibition/collection it belongs to. The researcher uses the information about the museum’s collection to support this part of the analysis. In addition, posts related to events and holidays were also noted as it is interesting to see similarities or differences in the way the three museums reported the same event.

Figure 1 - Open coding Stedelijk museum



The analysis considers what the content in Instagram represented as well as how it was manipulated through the captions and hashtags added by the museum. The researcher considered the form of the contents, whether it is video or image, the length and language of the caption. The textual contents of the post were categorized based on the subject and the context of the message. Quotations were coded in terms of their objectives such as educational, marketing-related (i.e. promoting exhibition), general museum information or non-art related. In addition, the sequences of Instagram posts were also examined. Through

sequential publishing, individual posts gain added relevance when viewed together with others posted around the same time (Weilenmann, Hillman and Jungselius, 2013). The creation of different narratives, or different ways to tell the story about the museum, was central in many of the Instagram posts that were analyzed. Please refer to the tables in the appendix for more detail of the coding process.

Lastly, the analysis takes into account how the museum seeks to engage with their audiences through the Instagram post. Mainly, the contents that were aimed to facilitate interaction or conversation, the 'repost' from the audience, and one that include the photo or video of the museum's visitors. This provides the indicator of online engagement and participatory culture in the museum's social media setting. As the sub-research question seeks to identify which factors that lead to audience engagement. Therefore, by analyzing how the museum tries to engage with the audiences as well as the elements that lead to the successful engagement will provide a better understanding to the effectiveness of the museum's Instagram strategy.

In order to answer the research question which aims to discover the institutional objectives of the museum's Instagram account on online engagement, data was gathered from two hundred and seventy posts, ninety posts were collected per each Instagram account. The first step of open coding came up with hundreds of codes, which were regrouped into the axial codes based on the characteristics and similarities. For example, the open codes which emerged in the Rijksmuseum's posts were 'Gallery of Honor', 'Cuypers Library' and 'Rijksmuseum's garden', and those were combined to make the axial code 'architecture and interior'. Some of the open codes which came up more than ten times were coded into separate axial codes since the occurrence of the code might be meaningful. For instance, the open code 'Loving Vincent' from the Van Gogh Museum occurs for 15 times, therefore it was included in the analysis as an axial code. The data was divided into three main families based on the museum as follows.

Table 1 - Axial Coding

Rijksmuseum	Stedelijk Museum	Van Gogh Museum
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announcement/General information 2. Architecture/Interior 3. Art knowledge/Interpretation of the artworks 4. Artworks 5. Audience-shared content 6. Exhibitions 7. Holidays/Seasonal greetings 8. Visitors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announcement/General information 2. Architecture/Interior 3. Artists-related 4. Art knowledge/Interpretation of the artworks 5. Artworks 6. Audience-shared content 7. Behind the scenes 8. Collectors 9. Exhibitions 10. Feedback 11. Holidays/Seasonal greetings 12. Job vacancies 13. Social causes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Architecture 2. Artists-related 3. Art knowledge/Interpretation of the artworks 4. Artworks 5. Audience-shared content 6. Behind the scenes 7. Exhibitions 8. Loving Vincent (movie)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of results is structured as follows: a description of distinctive attributes and characteristics found within each museum is provided. Next, the prevailing three themes that demonstrate different objectives of museums in Instagram are discussed: (1) enabling digital consumption of artworks; (2) taste formation and education; and (3) public image of the museum. The main themes will culminate in a discussion of audience engagement, which is the most significant finding of this research. The last section discusses the determinants that influence audience engagement among the three museums.

4.1 Specific Characteristics Found (Per Museum)

The characteristics that emerged during the analysis show a different approach used by museums for their Instagram posts; it is important to discuss how they do this more specifically. Table 2 outlines several different characteristics, patterns and aspects found in the three museums. This is done in order to show how museums overlap in terms of their content and methods of participation. Moreover, some distinctive characteristics provided meaningful insights to the museum's objective on Instagram and its effect on the success of their online presence.

Table 2 - Key differences and similarities between Rijksmuseum, Stedelijk museum, and Van Gogh museum.

	Characteristics	Rijksmuseum	Stedelijk Museum	Van Gogh Museum
Content type	Artworks	76%	71%	88%
	Museums' building	15%	7%	1%
	People (collectors, staffs, visitors etc.)	8%	14%	4%
	Other	1%	8%	7%
Content form	Videos	0	23%	18%
	Images	100%	77%	82%
	Lengthy posts (longer than the caption box)	10%	67%	23%
	Short posts	90%	10%	19%
Language	Posts in Dutch	0	8%	0
Objectives	Promotional content (exhibitions, events, etc.)	40%	34%	48%
	Educational content	38.5%	51%	48%
	General museum information	21.5%	7%	0
	Non-art related content	0	8%	4%
Audience engagement	Interaction with audience (asking questions, poll, etc.)	3%	13%	3%
	Audience-shared posts	3%	4%	1%
	Non-audience related	94%	83%	96%

The Rijksmuseum

The analysis suggests that there is a clear strategy in the Rijksmuseum's Instagram posts. It was observed that they often post the photos of their iconic architecture, promoted by tagging the city of Amsterdam. It shows the relationship the museum has with the city, even though all other museums discussed here are from Amsterdam as well, but the Rijksmuseum has a significant occurrence compared to the other museums. Other topics generally discussed by the Rijksmuseum are holidays, general museum information, and the announcement of upcoming events and exhibitions. This means that the Rijksmuseum often uses Instagram as a promotional tool. This type of social media behavior suggests the museum tries to provide additional information of their services in order to drive the consumption of physical visit.

Figure 2 Cuypers Library posted on April 23

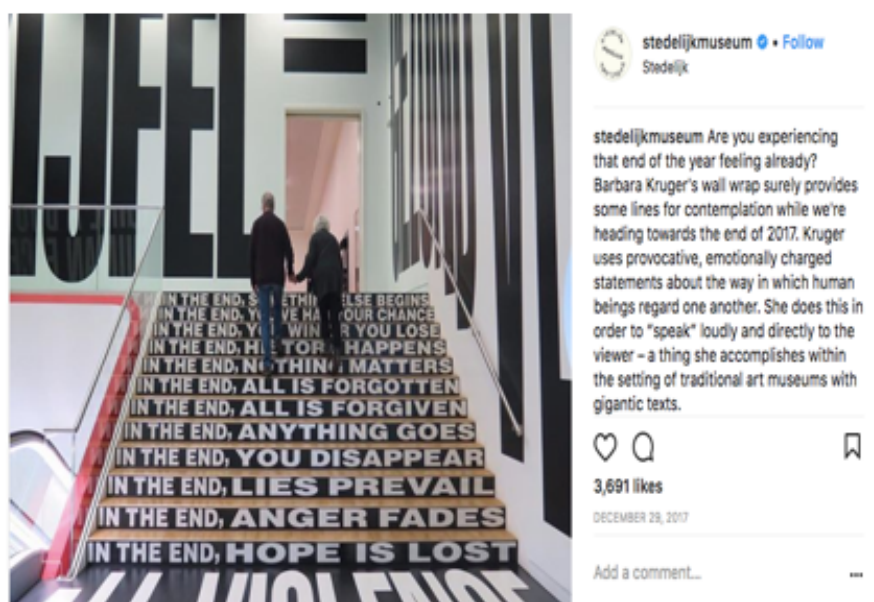


The Stedelijk Museum

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Stedelijk Museum is the vast amount of posts in their Instagram-exclusive campaigns. For instance, "Community curated" social series shows some of the Stedelijk Museum's hidden treasures that are currently in storage

and not on display. The audience is invited to choose an artwork to be posted every week on Instagram, which explains why there is much more audience interaction here than in the other museums (See Table 2). This helps the museum build and maintain relationships with consumers and convert them into advocates (Labrecque et al., 2011). Interestingly, the Stedelijk Museum also utilizes Instagram for non-art related communication with its followers, from discussing ongoing social issues to recruiting staff members and volunteers through the online platform. This behavior shows social media is effective in that it can reach a large amount of audiences, thus increasing the quality and visibility of content (Roncha and Radclyffe, 2016).

Figure 3 - Barbara Kruger's Installation posted on December 29



The Van Gogh Museum

Analysis found the Van Gogh Museum to have the most repetitive content of all museums. The interesting part of their style is that images were often reposted using different captions, which shows the important role of the text in terms of audience reception (Hu et al., 2014). For example, the exact self-portrait by Van Gogh was posted twice on different occasions, however, one received much more interaction from the audience due to its textual content (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). Moreover, at the time of data collection the movie 'Loving Vincent', which was based on the biography and

artworks of Van Gogh, was nominated for the Academy Awards in the category of best animated feature films. Although *Loving Vincent* didn't win the Oscar, but the Van Gogh Museum has made immense effort to promote the movie on their Instagram posts

Figure 4 - Self Portrait (1888) posted on March 20



Figure 5 - Self Portrait (1888) posted on April 8



4.2 Enabling Digital Consumption of Artworks

Surprisingly, analysis reveals that even though “a picture is worth a thousand words”, words actually increase the value of the posts on Instagram. Images alone are not enough; words and meanings are essential in contextualizing works and give them worth (Hall, 2011). Especially in the museum settings, we often see the information of the artworks in small text boxes on the display. These accompanied texts help to articulate the objects and create a bounded representation system (Kidd, 2011). On Instagram, the captions serve the same function as to give meaning to the visual content. In addition, it was observed that the Van Gogh Museum often uses the captions that include the quotes or letters from Vincent van Gogh himself. It gives more insight and understanding that helps the audience identify with the artworks.

The majority of museums' posts are about artworks (see Table 2), paintings and prints accounted for the largest frequency of posts comparing to other forms of artwork such as sculpture or installation (Weilenmann et al., 2012). Aesthetic qualities were seen as central in the communication of the museum on social media. The posts that focus on the artworks tend to be either highly authored and descriptive; with a very strong museum

'voice' in the caption. This style of publication of collections contrasts to the online collection databases which describe individual objects (by creator, size, materials etc.) without context and in isolation from related works (Trant and Wyman, 2006). Instagram allows for the management of a narrative and for connecting posts to related components through the use of hashtags and geotags.

The three museums alternately posted the artworks to showcase their exhibitions or collections. In a way, this could be an act of signaling quality and informing the consumer. According to Hutter (2011) the producers, therefore, will provide signals about the qualities of their products or services without enabling the interested consumers to actually enjoy the full experience. The methods for doing so can be divided into three levels: (1) the museum makes claims about the features of experience goods through advertising messages; (2) the consumer gets limited access to the good, in this case consumers were only allowed to see parts of exhibitions as 'preview' on Instagram; and (3) the museum stimulates word-of-mouth signals by posting in social media, where past and potential visitors exchange information through interaction with the museum posts (Hutter, 2011). This will be further discussed in the latter section about audience engagement.

However, this is different in the case of the Stedelijk Museum's crowd curation project in which they post about the artworks that were not currently on display. By permitting the online access to the collection, the museum is making their output available to "as many and as wide a range of consumers as possible" (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012, pp.207). The goal of museums is to provide an extended access to the art on Instagram parallel to the physical visit. As all three museums make available their collection on their website, Instagram represents an effort to branch out the online access of the artworks; as contents on social media can potentially reach much more audiences than the content on the websites (Navarrete and Borowiecki, 2016).

4.3 Taste Formation and Education

Knowledge transfer and taste-making are important objectives of museums evident from captions. Next to the presentation of the artworks, education is of primary concern to museums and in recent years a prominent discourse has emerged that recognized the potential for social media to take a central role in informal learning environments (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012). Museums have the role of providing audiences with the means to interpret art and history, justifying the use of mediated representations of artefact and culture (Hall, 2011). This is an important process as it also allows the audience to develop their 'taste' and further consume museums' services.

Figure 6 - Klok by Jan Eisenloeffel, Stedelijk museum



As seen in Figure 6 above from the Stedelijk Museum, the image of the artwork was accompanied by the descriptive caption that include the biography of the artist and his inspiration under the hashtag #bornonthisday. There is the common recurring pattern among the three museums to post a brief biography about the artists on their birthday. Often, this method was used as a way to promote the museum's collections and exhibitions. In a way, this is the underlying marketing strategy of the museum to create a potential class of visitors by educating the audience (Warde, 2008). Consumers derive the information that might prompts them to try new products and experiences (Hutter, 2011).

Social media enriches museums' learning environment by maintaining an authorized dialog with the audience (Weilenmann et al., 2012). This is specially the case with the Van Gogh Museum, which often posts extensive insights about the artist's life. Several of Van Gogh's personal collections and photographs were shown on Instagram, including many artworks which were not on display. The content was recognized by the audience as legitimate, given it was from the official Instagram account (Wong, 2011). It allows the museum to be in control of the context and narrative of the objects.

Moreover, it is observed among the museums that the description of the artworks on Instagram is often more extensive than the description of the same artworks on websites. This suggests Instagram was the preferred platform to distribute the knowledge virtually, though one must keep in mind that this research only analyzed Instagram, not other social media channels. Interestingly, the Stedelijk Museum hosts many Instagram-exclusive campaigns such as the Collectors' series, which are five short documentaries dedicated to influential collectors. The campaign promoted the exhibition 'Jump into the Future' but it was included in the education theme because the contents were rather educative.

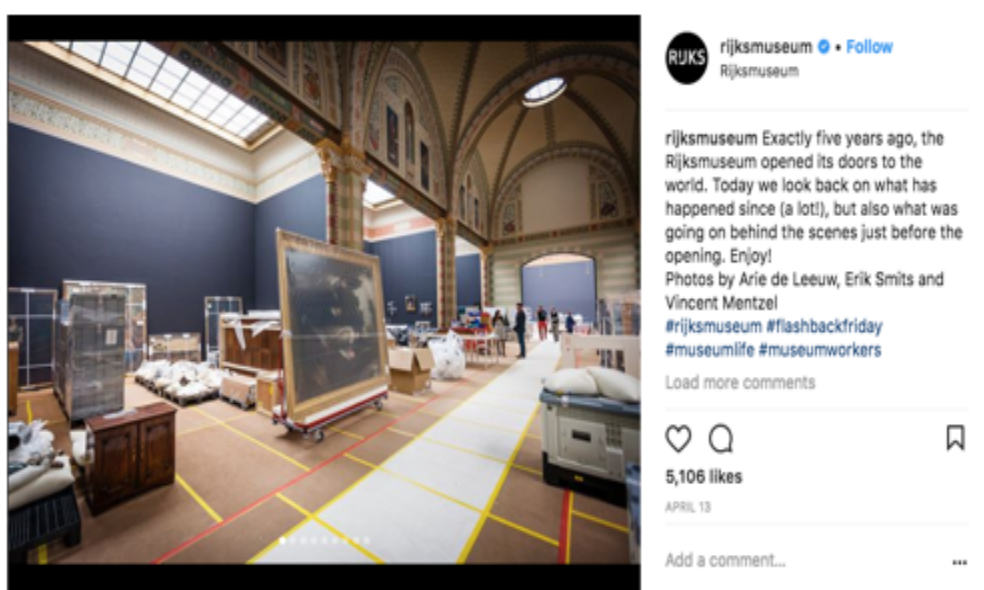
The online presence of museums supported the taste-making objective because it exposed the consumer to cultural products. Each new experience permits consumers to establish relationships with the objects, allowing them to form a taste (Meyer, 2000). The taste of art is also developed in a social process through exchange and participation (Katz-Gerro, 2004). On Instagram, the audience was encouraged to participate and negotiate the dominant rhetoric which influences their tastes (Meyer, 2000). Every encounter with the museum is important, as it allows the consumer to experiment and discover new information. This will be discussed further in the latter section about audience engagement.

4.4 Public Image of the Museum

Unlike the first two topics discussed, this theme is relevant to the image of the museum which does not necessarily deal with the artworks directly. Rather, it focuses on how museums construct their online personalities and identities. The presence of museums on Instagram can contribute to the building of an image for the public. According to Kidd (2011), social media has been used to give museums a recognizable face as an extension of their branding activities. The reputation and image of the museum is important because the consumer often relies on these factors to make a decision, especially for the first-time visitor with little museum experience (Hausmann, 2012).

The most common strategies among the three museums are, for instance, posting the photo of the museums' buildings and its surrounding. According to Roncha and Radclyffe (2016), in fashion marketing Instagram research, the brands often used convey the firm's identity through the use of brand logos. In the museum's context, the building serves the purpose of the logo in that it distinguishes one museum from another. Another effective strategy to building a public image includes sharing the behind the scenes contents (Figure 7). It gives insight to what is behind the walls of the museum and, thus contributes to building an intimate relationship with the public.

Figure 7 - Rijksmuseum during renovation



It is important for the audience to understand the museum, knowing what it stands for, and to identify with the same causes and values (Cole, 2008). Especially in the Stedelijk Museum, it was observed that the museum touches upon certain social issues such as racism, sexism, and freedom of expression in some of their posts. These kinds of posts reflect the ideology and core value of the museum, and their effort to be relevant to society (Kotler, 2001). Interestingly, it was also found that the Stedelijk Museum also made some pop-culture reference in one of their posts, mentioning famous visitors such as Shia LeBeouf, Usher, and Dusky Springfield.

The posts of the Van Gogh Museum were the least to promote the museum's public image and instead focused on building the character of Vincent van Gogh through posts about his inspiration, his personal experiences, and about the people around him. The museum's strategy concentrates on influencing affective beliefs and associating with the audience's emotions, visible through the prominent use of hashtags such as #Vincentvangogh #Vangoghadmires #Vangoghinspires. Perhaps this characteristic difference is due to the fact that the Van Gogh Museum is dedicated to just one artist, therefore the image of the artist contributed to the image of the museum itself.

The Rijksmuseum, the Stedelijk Museum and the Van Gogh Museum use specific marketing elements to build an image for the public, to attract an audience, and to relate to them. This marketing behavior suggests that these museums are able to capture and retain the attention of the public and to turn them into followers. It is important for the museum to focus on consumer orientation and to ensure memorable experience at every encounter in order to achieve their satisfaction (Kotler, 2011). This shows that museums are becoming more approachable and eager to connect with broader segments of the public (Weilenmann et al., 2012).

4.5 Audience Engagement

The main pattern discovered throughout the analysis is the efforts among the museum to engage with the audience. This is a significant factor when discussing the participatory culture; it shows how museums are engaging and empowering people to participate (Russo et al., 2008). As mentioned before, social media allows for word-of-mouth signals to emerge between the public, through the interaction between past and potential visitors (Hutter, 2011). Moreover, the exchange between the cultural institutions and consumers (on social media) allow for their taste to develop (Meyer, 2000; Warde, 2008). It shows that the effect of audience engagement is relevant in all aspects on the museum's Instagram presence and cannot be overlooked.

The following strategies were used to engage with the audience on a deeper level. **Asking a question:** the best way to start a conversation is to ask a simple question, as seen in Figure 8, a painting of a pair of shoes was presented along with the question "Do you think these are the shoes of Vincent?". In this environment, the audience was encouraged to share their own narrative and interpretation of the artwork; enabling the museum to maintain a cultural dialogue with the public in real time (Weilenmann et al., 2012). This method is most commonly used because it also attracts more attention to the artwork by surrounding a conversation around it.

Figure 8 - Shoes (1888), Van Gogh museum



The next strategy also involves asking questions, however the aim was to draw **feedback** from the audience. This includes question such as “What is your personal favorite of the exhibition?” or “What would you like to see more on our Instagram account?”. Engaging with audiences is a good way not only to develop relationship but also to receive valuable assessment. It allows the consumer to voice what is relevant for them, so the museum can cater the posts’ content to their preferences. A successful implementation of this strategy will increase the level of satisfaction and the benefits that consumers derived from the museum services (Hausmann, 2012).

The last strategy involves the museum seeking to engage by **reposting the audience-shared contents**. This type of post usually encourages the visitor to share photos taken at the museum, which will later be posted on the museum’s Instagram account (See Figure 9). The owners of the photos were tagged in order to notify and engage them in the posts. Instagram photo sharing has increasingly become a new visitor practice in art exhibitions, urging museums to adapt to changing audiences’ expectations (Weilenmann et al., 2012). These visitors’ photos also served as a reputation signal for the museum, as showing the satisfied consumers can attract greater potential consumers.

Aside from these observed strategies, it also came across that the Stedelijk Museum occasionally posted in Dutch which reflects their interest to connect with the local audience. At the same time, the Stedelijk Museum also engaged with their audiences more than the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum. This shows that online interactivity is an important factor in the presence of the Stedelijk Museum’s Instagram account. These initiatives are important in building the loyalty of supporters since a good relationship with past visitors means returning visitors (Cole, 2008).

Figure 9 - Snapshot from the video compilation of visitors at Studio Drift exhibition, Stedelijk museum



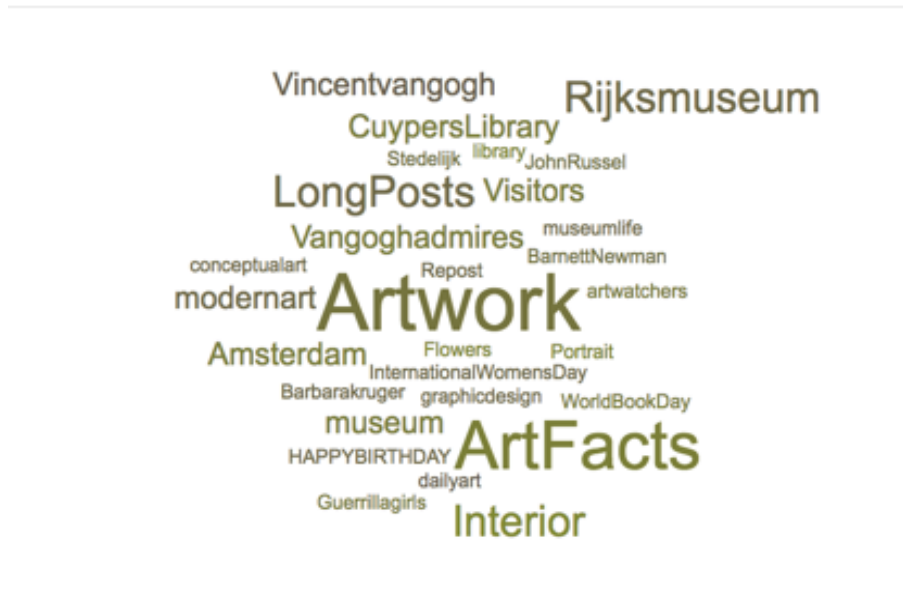
4.6 Determinants That Influence Audience Engagement

Museums participate on social media with different objectives and strategies in which they seek to engage with audiences. This final analysis answered the sub-research question which aims to find the characteristics of Instagram post that are most effective in engaging museums' audiences. A successful Instagram presence not only attracts more visitors, but also builds a relationship with the audience, being the local community, education segments, or tourism (Cole, 2008). Most importantly, it provides free access to arts for everyone, at any time and place. Therefore, it is important to know which strategy is the most effective to achieve maximum consumers' satisfaction.

As mentioned before, this research defined success on Instagram based on popularity in term of the amount of likes and comments. The following characteristics were found to receive the most likes: for the **Rijksmuseum**, the three most popular posts were all of the interior of the museum; two out of which were photos of the iconic Cuypers Library. It was also observed that the most liked posts was an audience-shared photo. For the **Stedelijk Museum**, three of the most liked photos were all of artworks with lengthy captions about the artists. One of the post was to celebrate International Women's Day, in which the museum collaborated with the Guerrilla Girls to touch upon the issue of sexism

and discrimination in the art world. Lastly, for the **Van Gogh Museum**, the three most liked photos were all paintings with descriptive captions about Van Gogh's life.

Figure 10 - Word cloud of the most popular contents among three museums



In terms of the most commented posts, the characteristics found per museum are the following: for the **Rijksmuseum**, the three most commented photos varied greatly. Two are artworks while one was the most liked photo. It was found that the most commented photo was accompanied by a caption in which the museum asked the audience what they would want to see in the next post. The same applies for the **Stedelijk Museum**, the most commented posts also have significant differences between them. One of them was the photo of the museum from 1947, along with the caption asking the public to share their favorite exhibition. Another post was the photo of their collection 'Stedelijk Base', in which the museum announced the opening of the exhibition and invited people to come visit. Lastly, it was observed that all of the most commented posts of the **Van Gogh Museum** were video footages from the movie 'Loving Vincent' which at the time of data gathering was nominated for the Academy Award.

Figure 11 - Word cloud of the most commented contents among three museums



To summarize, the three museums have different audiences and therefore require different strategies to engage with their public. The most popular posts succeeded in grabbing the attention of people and triggered a positive reaction. One thing in common for the most liked posts among the three museums is that hashtags were used excessively, which increases the visibility of posts. For the most commented posts, the most prominent were ones with requesting answers and feedback from the audience. As discussed earlier, this is a common strategy for museums to engage with consumers through an interactive approach.

5. CONCLUSION

This thesis analyses the contents of museums' Instagram posts revealing different strategies to reach out and engage with an online audience as well as a system of meanings and values particular to each museum. Data was gathered from the Instagram accounts of the Rijksmuseum, the Stedelijk Museum, and the Van Gogh Museum, and components from the posts were carefully investigated. The data analysis comprises of 90 posts from each museum, 270 Instagram posts were qualitatively analysed in total; ranging from the period of December 2017 to May 2018. After the process of open, axial, and selective coding, the findings reveal the answer to the research question: *How do museums communicate through Instagram and to what extent does an Instagram account reflect the institutional objectives to engage with the audience?*

The analysis suggested that there are some specific patterns of Instagram content that varied between the museums. For instance, The Rijksmuseum often posted the image of the museum's architecture, promoting their events and exhibitions on Instagram. The Stedelijk Museum tends to focus more on engaging and establishing relationship with their audiences. Moreover, they are the only museum that posted some of the content in Dutch. The Van Gogh Museum, interestingly, tends to post the same artworks in many of their contents, but using different captions to provide the narrative. Apart from these different characteristics among the museums, the analysis came up with three main themes that justified the museum's objectives to engage the audience.

Firstly, the majority of the museum's Instagram posts were about artworks. This is important to promote their exhibitions and collections because consumers often rely on this information to make a decision, especially for the first-time visitor with limited museum experience (Hausmann, 2012). On Instagram, aesthetic quality is central to the presentation of content; thus, posting the artworks could be seen as signaling quality, by showing the audience what to expect from the museum visit. Most importantly, by doing so, the museum also permits the digital consumption and allows them to branch out online access of the artworks; as contents on Instagram can potentially reach much more audiences than the content on the websites.

Secondly, the museum's Instagram presence indicates the efforts to strengthen education by providing audiences with the means to interpret art and to know its history. This process is further of utter importance to museums because they can influence the taste of online consumers, creating a new class of potential consumers (Warde, 2008). Instagram was the preferred platform to distribute knowledge compared to the museum's website due to its ability to reach wider scope of audiences. Each encounter with art on Instagram allows the audiences to establish relationships with the objects, which results in the taste for particular experiences (Meyer, 2000).

Lastly, Instagram is highly relevant to museums' publicity because it allows the construction of a recognizable image for its audiences. Visitors find it important to understand what the museum stands for in order to be able to identify with its core values and ideology (Cole, 2008). In order to achieve that, museums employ certain marketing strategies, such as using symbols and appealing to audiences' emotion. A successful implication of social media turns audiences into followers and advocates (Labrecque et al., 2011). The key element to public image is to provide a memorable experience.

Moreover, Instagram allows museums to engage with the audience and develop a meaningful relationship. This notion is central to many activities on Instagram, which was directed to receive some kind of interactions from the audience. The strategies for audience engagement among the three museums can be classified into three types: firstly, museums ask general questions to the public just to involve them in the conversation. Secondly, museums ask more specific questions aimed to generate feedback. In this way, museums could cater the future posts directly to their audiences' needs. Lastly, museums post the audience-shared posts on Instagram, increasing the connection between the institution and its audiences.

A successful presence on Instagram is beneficial to museums in many ways, from attracting more visitors to educating the public and building communities (Cole, 2008). The effective strategy will result in consumer satisfaction and positive experience (Kotler, 2011). However, each museum has different audiences and therefore require a different approach to catch their attention. In order to answer the sub-research question that seeks to identify

the determinants that influence audience engagement on the museum's Instagram posts, it can generally be concluded the most efficient Instagram posts are those that include an artwork with a descriptive caption (most likes) and those that asked questions to trigger conversation (most comments). These characteristics are indicators that are relevant to positive reactions from audiences.

On the last note, despite the fact that Instagram is a relatively visual-centered platform, the texts still played an important part in contextualizing and giving meanings to the posts. Every visual and every text constructed the symbolic relationships between the artwork, the museum, and the audience. Online and in-house museum visitors should not be considered as separate entities, it is important for museum professionals to understand how the behavior of museum consumers may change over time, to able to develop and strengthen a complementary and supportive relationship between museums and museums' Instagram (Marty, 2008).

5.1 Limitations and Implications for Further Research

This study is subjected to a certain limitations: Firstly, it was acknowledged that due to the fact data was collected from the period of six months, it is impossible to form a complete image of the museum's Instagram account. If a previous period was included in the analysis, other specific patterns and characteristics might have emerged. However, the data collected does represent a significant period that takes into account the dynamics of social media through the coverage of different events and holidays, which suggests the strategy of each museum. Trends and topics of conversation always change, due to the fact that social media has to be maintained daily. It is highly doubtful that the objectives of museums will change as the principle of social media remains the same: to engage with audiences.

The disadvantages of the qualitative data analysis are the interpretation issues and bias surrounding the qualitative research. Due to the subjective interpretation, this research does not allow generalizability. The researcher must remain as objective and neutral as possible to provide critical assessment on the analysis. Moreover, there are several limitations due to the sample and overall data collection. In order to provide a relevant

interpretation, the researcher used additional data from the museum's websites such as information about the exhibitions and collections to support the analysis.

On the other hand, this research only investigates Instagram and not other social media channels. For that reason, the results cannot be true to all objectives of social media usage of museums. Moreover, other aspects such as the popularity of the museum itself can also affect the popularity of their social media, regardless of the strategy they used. This research cannot cover such topic due to the relatively different number of followers and visitors per museum. However, this sample was deemed appropriate because it offered diversity and contrasting perspective on museums. Future research should look at how external factors might crowd-out social media effort.

Lastly, this research excluded the audience perception or the actual impact of social media contents on the visitor. It cannot say whether the content on social media can actually attract more visitors or donors. This was because there are other variants that can influence the decision of the audience. However, it is undeniable that these museums have effective social media strategies to attract the audience. Accordingly, future research could consider how does public image online influence physical relation or visit to the museum, and the relation of a museum with other aspects of life and creative industries.

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APPENDIX A – RIJKSMUSEUM

The open coding from Rijksmuseum Instagram posts amount to 117 codes in total, which were grouped into these axial and selective codes.

Open codes	no.	Axial codes	Selective codes
Announcement	3	Announcement/General Information	Public image of the museum
Activities	1		
Location	2		
Opening/closing time	4		
Visitor's tip	2		
Practical information	2		
#Amsterdam	45	Architecture/Interior	
#Amstergram	2		
#Architecture	2		
#Artmuseum	1		
#Gardens	1		
#Librarylife	1		
#Museum	2		
#Museumlife	17		
#Museumplein	1		
#Museumworkers	4		
#Museums	4		
#Rijksmuseum	86		
#Rijksmuseumgardens	1		
#Thisisholland	1		
#Visit_holland	1		
@iamsterdam	6		
Atmosphere	9		
Conservation	2		
Cuypers library	2		
Gallery of Honor	1		
Garden	2		
Geotag: Netherlands	1		
Geotag: Rijksmuseum	75		
Installation process	5		
Museum building	7		
Museum interior	6		
Restoration	2		
Staff(s)	3		

#Artdaily	1	Artworks	Presentation of the artworks
#Artwatchers	6		
#Artworkoftheday	2		
#Dailyart	22		
#Dailyinspiration	1		
#Flashbackfriday	2		
#Hanami	1		
#Mondaymotivation	1		
#Photography	3		
#Photographycollection	1		
#Porcelain	1		
#Volendam	1		
#Windmills	1		
Artworks	68		
Collection	40		
Drawing	2		
Flower(s)	9		
Landscape	8		
Painting	41		
Photograph	7		
Portrait	12		
Print	4		
Self-portrait	1		
Statue/sculpture	3		
Still life	4		
Study	1		
#Behindthescenes	7	Exhibitions	
#Edvanderelsken	2		
#Hightsociety	12		
Behind the scene	10		
Exhibition: Ed van der Elskén	2		
Exhibition: High Society	15		
Exhibition: Top Ten on Tour	1		

#Breitner #Dutchgoldenage #Hiroshige #Meissen #Otd #Rembrandt #Vermeer @kmska_museum @krollermullermuseum @museumprinsenhofdelft Art history Artist's birthday Descriptive caption Foreign art	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 32 4 9 5	Art knowledge/interpretation of the artworks	Education/taste-making
@andyhendrata @arden_nl @living_netherlands @sambit.k.p Credit Feedback Regram Visitor-shared post	1 1 1 1 2 2 1 2	Audience-shared contents	Audience engagement
#5mei #Bevrijdingsdag #Chinesenewyear #Internationalwomensday #Kingsday #Koningsdag #Olympics #Pyeongchang2018 #Sakura #Spring #Winter2018 #Winterolympic2018 #Worldbookday Chinese New Year Easter International women's day Kingsday Liberation day Spring Valentine's day Winter Winter Olympics 2018 World book day	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 3 1 6 1 1	Holidays/Seasonal greetings	
#Family Family	1 3	Visitors	

Support	2		
Thank you	4		
Visitor(s)	4		

APPENDIX B – STEDELIJK MUSEUM

The analysis of the Stedelijk Museum Instagram resulted in 461 open codes. Many of them were overlapping and repetitive; after sorting and rearranging the data, the researcher narrowed the open codes down to 202. These codes were then categorized into these axial and selective codes.

Open codes	no.	Axial codes	Selective codes
#Audiotour	4	Announcement/general information	Museums' image to the public
#Finalweekend	1		
#Finalweeks	1		
#Giftshop	2		
#ReubenXStedelijk	1		
@mamacashfund	3		
@vangoghmuseum	1		
Announcement	1		
Audiotour	4		
Book	1		
Collaboration	4		
Event	4		
Museum shop	2		
Non-art related	6		
Product advertisement	1		
Promotion	1		
#Behindthescenes	3	Behind the scenes	
#Conservation	1		
#Makingof	1		
#Museumthrowback	1		
#Sneakpeek	1		
Behind the scenes	6		
Construction	1		
Installation process	3		
Live series	2		
Staff(s)	3		

#Artcollecting #Artcollector #Borgmann #Collecting #Collector #Theborgmandonation #Thomasborgmann Collector(s) Interview Showing gratitude	5 5 4 3 1 6 5 6 7 4	Collectors	
#Jobs #Student #Vacature Internship Post in Dutch Student volunteer Vacancies	1 1 2 2 7 1 2	Job vacancies	
#Amsterdam #Library #Museum #Stedelijk #Stedelijkbase #Stedelijkmuseum @stedelijkmuseumlibrary Architecture Atmosphere Geotag: Stedelijk Geotag: Stedelijk Museum Museum building Museum interior	1 1 7 12 27 25 2 1 3 65 2 1 5	Museum interiors/architecture	
#Activism #Activist #Apartheid #Coldwar #Environment #Feminism #Feminist #Freedom #Freedomofspeech #Girlpower #Grlpwr #Lgbtq #Society #Waste	1 1 1 1 1 2 3 1 1 1 2 1 1 1	Social causes	

Social cause	7		
#Artsyselfie #Museumselfie #Museumselfieday2018 #Selfie @Blikopeners @buutvrijforlife @cbkzuidoost @museumselfieday Audience-shared content Credit Famous visitor Regram Visitor(s)	1 1 1 1 2 3 1 1 4 3 1 3 11	Audience-shared content	Audience engagement
#Communitycurated #Question #Review Feature Feedback Poll Review Voting	4 2 1 1 5 2 1 4	Feedback	
#Boekenweek #Happynewyear #Holidays #Kingsday #Spring #Valentinesday Easter International women's day New year	1 1 1 1 1 2 1 3 2	Holidays/seasonal greetings	

#Art	4	Artworks	Presentation of the artwork
#Clockwork	1		
#Dandelion	3		
#Filmnoir	1		
#Filmstills	1		
#Instaart	2		
#Installation	1		
#Laccordbleu	2		
#Nature	3		
#Painting	5		
#Patterns	1		
#Performanceart	1		
#Portraits	1		
#Sculpture	1		
#Tapastry	1		
#Tbt	4		
#Throwback	5		
#Virtualreality	1		
Animation	1		
Art installation	12		
Furniture	1		
Graffiti	3		
Graphic design	1		
Illustration	1		
Landscape	2		
Mixed media	2		
Painting	30		
Performing art	1		
Photography	15		
Portrait	4		
Poster	1		
Sculpture	12		
Tapestry	2		
Textile	1		
Throwback	2		
#Codednature	5	Exhibitions	
#Exhibition	4		
#Foreveryoung	2		
#Fragilefuture	2		
#Jumpintothefuture	8		
#Newexhibition	2		
#Studiadrift	6		
#Upcomingexhibition	1		
Exhibition: Forever Young	2		
Exhibition: Freedom is Recognized Necessary	1		

Exhibition: I am a Native Foreigner	1		
Exhibition: Jump into the Future	13		
Exhibition: Stefan Tcherepnin	2		
Exhibitions: Studio Drift	9		
#Barbarakruger	2	Artists' related	Knowledge and taste-making agenda
#Barnettnewman	3		
#Birthday	1		
#Bornonthisday	24		
#Charleytoorop	2		
#Cobra	3		
#Edvanderelsken	1		
#Femaleartist	1		
#Guerrillagirls	3		
#Happybirthday	9		
#Jeffkoon	2		
#Karalappel	2		
#Keithharing	4		
#Onthisday	8		
#Vangogh	2		
#Willemdekoening	2		
#Wolfgangtillmans	2		
#Yayoikusama	2		
#Yvesklein	3		
#Womeninthearts	1		
Artist's birthday	29		
Biography	1		

#Abstract	4	Art knowledge/interpretation of the artworks	
#Abstractexpressionism	2		
#Artfacts	1		
#Artinspiration	2		
#Biodesign	1		
#Conceptualart	2		
#Design	9		
#Expressionism	2		
#Fauvism	2		
#Funfact	1		
#Futurism	1		
#Graffiti	4		
#Graphicdesign	2		
#Industrialdesign	1		
#Minimalism	1		
#Modernart	31		
#Postimpressionism	1		
#Postmodernism	1		
#Streetart	2		
#Techart	4		
#Technology	3		
#Trivia	1		
@nbcnews	1		
Art documentary	1		
Art history	50		
Fashion	1		
Contemporary art	9		
Lengthy caption	65		

APPENDIX C – VAN GOGH MUSEUM

Lastly, the coding process of the Van Gogh Museum resulted into 77 open codes, in which were narrowed down into these following axial and selective codes.

Open codes	no.	Axial codes	Selective codes
#Iamsterdam #Museumplein #Vangoghmuseum Geotag: Van Gogh Museum Museum building	1 1 1 16 1	Architecture	Public image of the museum
Behind the scenes Installation process Snapshot Sneak peek Staff(s) Work in progress	4 2 2 1 3 1	Behind the scene	
#Delacroix #Happybirthdayvangogh #Jantoorop #Johnrussel #Onthisday #Quote #Vangogh #Vangoghblossoms #Vangoghselfies #Vincentvangogh Artist's birthday Letter Quote	1 2 1 1 2 3 13 4 16 69 4 4 19	Artist's related	Knowledge/taste-making agenda
#Vangoghadmires #Vangoghinspires #Vincentloves Art history Lengthy caption	35 1 14 44 20	Art knowledge/interpretation of the artwork	

#Sunset	1	Artworks	Presentation of the artwork
@harvardartmuseums	1		
@krollermullermuseum	1		
@metmuseum	1		
@museum_folkwang	1		
@national_gallery	1		
@philamuseum	1		
@rijksmuseum	1		
@vangoghbrabant	1		
Detail	2		
Drawing	3		
Flower(s)	3		
Landscape	7		
Original	1		
Painting	64		
Performance	1		
Photography	1		
Portrait	7		
Print	17		
Reproduction	1		
Self-portrait	19		
Still-life	4		
Tree	4		
Video	16		
Wave	1		
Woodblock print	4		
Wood work	1		
#Vangoghjapan	33	Exhibition	
Collection	39		
Exhibition: Gauguin and Laval	1		
Exhibition: Van Gogh Japan	33		
Exhibition: Zeng Fanzhi	2		

#Maisonvangogh	1	Audience-shared content	Audience engagement
#Vangoghvillagenuenen	1		
@courtauld	1		
@jeffreyOng	1		
@masp_official	1		
Celebration	1		
Compilation	1		
Congratulation	3		
Credit	1		
Family	1		
Thank you	1		
#Lovingvincent	3		
#Oscars	1		
#Oscars90	1		
#Oscars2018	5		
#Vincentdeservesthis	7		
@axelruger	3		
@dorota_kobiela	1		
@hughweichman	1		
@lovingvincentmovie	6		
Animation	6		
Geotag: Dolby Theatre	1		
Geotag: Hollywood	4		
Loving Vincent	15		
Promotion	2		
Red carpet	1		