Museums are closed. Now what?

Strategic Communication Employed by Museums on Instagram during the

COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the closure of most museums worldwide. These organizations then needed to rely only on digital tools, especially social media, to maintain a relationship with their public. Despite the numerous studies on strategic communication, few have focused on exceptional situations. This lack of knowledge, added to the impact of the pandemic on the digital transformation of museums, made it essential to understand how art museums carried out strategic communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper focused on studying how art museums cultivated relationships with their public through Instagram during the first six months of the pandemic and how the audience engaged with the published content. The Instagram communication of three art museums, the Rijksmuseum, the British Museum, and the Louvre, was studied through thematic analysis. The analysis was conducted on 150 Instagram posts and 1500 user comments. Communicational strategies used by the museums were considered, as well as the influence of cultural patterns and the weight of Instagram initiatives on the digital transformation of cultural institutions. Findings indicate that museums focused on portraying an accessible, humanized image by taking advantage of the wide variety of content in their collections and giving a protagonist role to their staff. They also offered material that contributed to the well-being and safety of the public, explicitly tailored to address the demands caused by COVID-19. Efforts to provide an improved experience online further added to the digital transformation of museums. However, emphasizing the physical location continued to be a relevant aspect of Instagram communication despite the closures caused by the pandemic. Moreover, despite the increasing weight of globalization, social media communication is shaped by cultural, national, and contextual aspects, such as colonial past and governmental policies. Finally, the study on public engagement showed that the audience engaged cognitively and emotionally with the content. Additionally, followers relied on these Instagram posts to interact with the museum and other users and reflect on the exceptional situation caused by COVID-19. Findings offer museums and other organizations insights into how to use strategic communication on social media to connect emotionally and cognitively with the public. Results also highlight how organizations can adopt a role beyond their goals and activities to contribute to the well-being of the audience.

KEYWORDS: *public relations, social media, art museums, COVID-19, public engagement, strategic communication, relationship cultivation strategies, dialogic communication.*

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

In March 2020, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam invited its Instagram followers to recreate some of the museum's paintings with objects they could find at home (Rijksmuseum, 2020a). It was the start of the pandemic, and museums worldwide had closed their doors. Some examples of the received responses included a still-life recreated with toilet paper rolls and Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642) reinvented with cooking spices and utensils (Rijksmuseum, 2020b).

This was one of the many initiatives museums were forced to adopt on social media during the pandemic. The increasing relevance of digital tools and the generalized lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic drove museums to turn to social media to maintain a close connection with their public (Agostino et al., 2020; Marini & Agostino, 2021). Social media became one of the only channels for museums to fulfill their essential role in society, to serve and educate the public while preserving art (Kotler & Kotler, 2000).

These digital platforms, designed to facilitate user interactions such as discussing ideas, sharing content, and co-creating, have become a crucial tool for organizations, brands, and institutions to implement their strategic organizational communication (Budge & Burness, 2018; Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020). This study will center on the specific case of Instagram, an increasingly popular visual application with more than a billion users worldwide (Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono, 2019; Statista, 2021). One of the distinctive features of Instagram is the use of images as the core communicational element, which contributes to its attractiveness and credibility (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). According to Agostino et al. (2020), Instagram is the platform that experienced the most significant growth during the pandemic. That, added to the correspondence between the visual nature of art museums and the visual quality of Instagram (Budge, 2017), supports the relevance of understanding how museums use this social media platform to maintain their relationship with the public. Moreover, understanding this phenomenon will provide insight into how the public engages with museums' digital content.

The present research will center on three of the most important art museums worldwide, the Louvre Museum, the British Museum, and the Rijksmuseum (van Riel & Heijndijk, 2017). These museums all closed their doors several times during the pandemic. This study will analyze how these institutions used strategic communication on Instagram to maintain their relationship and engage with the public during the first six months of the pandemic. This research will also incorporate a cross-cultural perspective. Analyzing museums from three countries, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, will offer insights into

how culture can affect strategic communication and organizational reactions to the pandemic and other exceptional situations (Papayiannis & Anastassiou-Hadjicharalambous, 2011).

The present study will examine two aspects of museums communication during the pandemic. On the one hand, it will focus on strategic communication, and digital initiatives museums use on social media. On the other hand, it will center on how the public engaged with museum communication.

First, strategic communication is understood as the use of communication by a firm to reach specific goals and its mission (Hallahan et al., 2007). Specifically, this study will investigate one of the six disciplines of strategic communication, public relations, whose goal is to create, cultivate and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders (Hallahan et al., 2007).

Most previous research has centered on how relationship cultivation strategies are implemented during stable economic and social environments (Huang et al., 2021). Therefore, it becomes relevant to examine a case where communication was conditioned by forced closures and social distancing at a global level. This will offer new insights into how organizations can communicate and foment their relationship with the public during exceptional times. According to Tranta et al. (2021), the pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation of museums, making it necessary to inspect how these cultural institutions implement strategic communication through digital tools, in this case, Instagram (Markopoulos et al., 2021).

Second, public engagement, the product of an interactive experience between the audience and the organization, is an understudied field in museum communication (Calder et al., 2009; Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). However, it is essential as it connects museum objects with the meaning-making processes of the audience. Thus, public engagement represents a crucial element in cultivating relationships between the public and the organization (Budge & Burness, 2018; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Moreover, it entails how organizations create social capital by including the public in decision-making processes and fomenting the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attachments of the audience to the organization (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020; Taylor & Kent, 2014). The cognitive dimension of engagement is especially relevant in the case of museums, as it can be linked to their educative role (Budge & Burness, 2018). Therefore, this study will analyze user comments on Instagram to understand how the audience engaged with the content generated by the selected institutions. Comments represent, in this case, the highest level of engagement as they require a more active attitude from the audience (Cho et al., 2017).

Recent research on the pandemic has centered on isolated communication cases (Burke et al., 2020; Corona, 2021) or quantitative studies of the increased use of digital tools (Agostino et al., 2020; Corona, 2021; Tranta et al., 2021). However, few studies have conducted an in-depth analysis of the content published through social media and how the public reacted to this kind of content. These gaps and motivations lead to the research question (RQ) and sub-questions (SQ):

- **RQ:** How do art museums cultivate relationships with their public through Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how does the public engage with this Instagram content?
    - **SQ1:** What communicational strategies do art museums implement to generate public engagement on Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic?
    - **SQ2:** Which cultural-dependent communicational patterns are present in the selected art museums from France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands?
    - **SQ3:** How does the public engage with COVID-19-related content communicated by the art museums on Instagram?
    - **SQ4:** How have digital initiatives on social media transformed the museum experience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The theoretical relevance of the study lies in providing insights into strategic communication during exceptional times, specifically regarding relationship cultivation strategies. These insights could later be applied not only to pandemics or health crises but also in other atypical situations. Focusing on the specific case of the pandemic will also further the understanding of how museums can adapt to different contexts. Moreover, part of the academic relevance of this research resides in contributing to the literature on the digital transformation of museums, as COVID-19 has accelerated this transition (Tranta et al., 2021). Therefore, this study will advance in the identification of new ways of digital communication adopted by these cultural institutions during the pandemic. Additionally, it will offer insight into how the theoretical framework of public relations can be connected to public engagement on social media (Huang et al., 2021). Given the relevance of public engagement in social media, new insights will be identified concerning fomenting engagement through communicational strategies.

Regarding the societal relevance, the findings will contribute to helping museums and other cultural institutions implement effective strategic communication, which can aid in their economic recovery and minimize the revenue losses caused by the pandemic (Huang et al., 2021). Despite the increase in digital communication channels, most museums are still not adequately equipped to manage exceptional situations in the future (International Council of

Museums, 2020). Therefore, findings can also offer guidance on how museums and other organizations can maintain relationships with their stakeholders during exceptional situations so that visitors can still enjoy these institutions' educational and cultural values through a digital environment. In addition, the present study will increase the understanding of how the public engages with museums' digital platforms, assisting museums in designing their digital strategies more accurately and improving the dialogue with visitors (Budge & Burness, 2018). Finally, due to the multinational approach adopted, findings will contribute to determining different cultural-dependent communicational patterns between countries and indicate which strategies can function better in different cultural contexts.

The following chapter will synthesize existing literature regarding strategic communication, public engagement, and museums' communication. The subsequent chapters include an overview of the methodology employed, the results obtained, a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings, and limitations and directions for future studies.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Strategic Communication

Organizations increasingly compete for the attention, loyalty, and admiration of stakeholders like customers, employees, and donors (Hallahan et al., 2007). One of the ways of achieving this is through strategic communication, defined by Hallahan et al. (2007) as the "purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission" (p. 3). Therefore, strategic communication focuses on how the organization presents and promotes itself (Hallahan et al., 2007). Other definitions also consider the role of organizations or communication entities, suggesting that the communication goals could include commercial and noncommercial goals (Werder et al., 2018).

Within strategic communication, Hallahan et al. (2007) establish that the development, implementation, and assessment of organizations' communication considers six disciplines: technical communication, political communication, information and social marketing campaigns, marketing, and public relations. The present study will center on public relations, considering that most museums were closed during the pandemic and found themselves in need of maintaining their relationships with the public through social media.

2.1.1. Public Relations

As one of the disciplines of strategic communication, public relations aim to identify, create, and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with crucial stakeholders, such as customers, employees, and community leaders (Hallahan et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2021). Despite being an independent discipline, it is typical for public relations to conflict with other communication functions, like marketing, which aims to create awareness and promote sales (Gesualdi, 2019; Hallahan et al., 2007). One of the causes of this friction is the increasing reliance on social media, which causes a collapse of divulgence channels (Gesualdi,2019). Therefore, it is necessary to consider some overlapping in the communication strategies used by these two disciplines.

Ki and Hon (2009) identify three stages in public relationships: antecedents, relationship maintenance strategies, and relationship quality outcomes. First, the antecedents specify the motivations of organizations to establish relationships with specific publics. The second stage comprises firms' daily strategies to build and maintain quality relationships with their stakeholders (Ki & Hon, 2009; O'Neil, 2014). Third, relationship outcomes are the effects of the implemented tactics (Ki & Hon, 2009). The present paper will center on the second stage and identify and analyze the strategies used by art museums to sustain quality relationships

with their public. In addition, it will analyze the public engagement of museums' strategic communication on Instagram.

Several theories establish a series of communication strategies used by organizations to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders, including dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020) and relationship cultivation theory (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014; Men & Tsai, 2012; O'Neil, 2014). The present research will center on the strategies proposed by the relationship cultivation theory and dialogic communication and will study if and how art museums used these during the pandemic, thus answering the research question and sub-question one.

2.1.1.1 Relationship Cultivation Theory

Relation cultivation theory refers to the study of how initiatives in public relations serve to build and sustain relationships with a strategic public (O'Neil, 2014). Within this theory, Hon and Grunig (1999) identified a series of strategies that can be applied to foment the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. Authors like Ki (2014) claim that relationship cultivation strategies form part of strategic communication, as organizations rely on these tactics to advance their goal of fomenting a better relationship with their stakeholders. This theory and its subsequent strategies have the limitation of not addressing specifically the case of social media or digital communication. Therefore, it will be necessary to examine which relationship cultivation strategies are effective when building relations online and if specific online strategies have been developed (Men & Tsai, 2012).

Before addressing the most used cultivation strategies, it is necessary to address the role of culture and globalization and how these affect organizational and communicational patterns. Hung (2004) distinguishes between two trends in this regard. On the one hand, the convergence approach identifies the effect of globalization on communication strategies and recognizes a variation toward more similar and homogeneous communication. On the other hand, the divergence approach emphasizes the differences between communication patterns in different cultures. Following the divergence approach, previous research on organizational communication during the COVID-19 pandemic identified a tendency of more individualistic cultures to emphasize access and positivity in their strategic communication (Huang et al., 2022). That would be the case with the selected museums, which all belong to Western cultures. Therefore, and despite cultural similarities, this research will consider possible differences by studying the strategic communication of museums in France, the Netherlands, and the UK. It will be observed how the implemented strategies varied according to cultural variances, thus answering sub-question two.

The most effective relationship cultivation strategies identified by Ki (2014) are access, positivity, openness and disclosure, sharing tasks, networking, and assurances. These strategies were considered when developing the codebook to analyze museum strategic communication, along with elements from other theories, like dialogic communication.

Access implies creating communication channels through which the strategic public can reach and communicate with the firm (Ki, 2014). This includes offering a direct way of communicating complaints or doubts, and offering access to decision-making processes (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Additionally, the interactivity provided by social media can be considered a use of access strategy (Ki, 2014). Ki and Hon (2009) developed a scale to measure relationship cultivation strategies, containing a series of identifying items. Despite the quantitative nature of the items, these will be used as a reference in the present study to recognize the use of each strategy. In the case of access, it can be characterized by elements such as presenting adequate contact information, opportunities to meet the staff, willingness to answer members' questions or concerns, and providing contact information for specific staff members relating to specific issues (Ki & Hon, 2009).

The *positivity* strategy involves an organizational effort to sustain pleasant interactions, thus benefiting the public with more enjoyable exchanges. Additionally, this tactic can be used for conflict resolution (Ki, 2014). Positivity includes encouraging feedback, affectionate and joyful communication, and avoiding criticism (Ki & Hon, 2009; Ki, 2014). Moreover, Ki and Hon (2009) specify actions like frequent and regular communication, essential benefits to members, and a courteous and cooperative communication style.

Openness and disclosure connect to explicitly sharing the involved parties' feelings, thoughts, and opinions (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014). It is characterized as a proactive and constructive strategy that contributes to equal power distribution between actors and represents a crucial element of trust (Ki & Hon, 2009). Specifically, it includes the efforts to deliver information about the nature of an organization and the actions that affect its stakeholders (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014). In their study, Ki and Hon (2009) determined that openness lacked significance as a strategy, as it could be considered a dimension of all relationship cultivation strategies. However, Huang et al. (2022) discovered that openness was the most used strategy among Chinese and American companies during the pandemic and underlined that honest and proactive communication is essential in uncertain situations like a health crisis.

Sharing tasks is a strategy in "which an organization and its stakeholders all perform their relevant responsibilities to solve problems and address concerns so that both parties are able to reach their interdependent goals" (Ki, 2014, p. 330). This strategy has been related to

corporate social responsibility and implies working on projects or solving common problems alongside stakeholders through educational, environmental, and social initiatives (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014; O'Neil, 2014). In the context of the pandemic, findings indicate that this strategy was the least used on social media by Chinese and American companies (Huang et al., 2022). However, this might differ in other cultural contexts, such as the European. Sharing tasks can be identified in actions such as supporting philanthropic efforts, offering employment opportunities, involvement in community issues, and developing solutions to stakeholder problems (Ki & Hon, 2009; Ki, 2014).

Hon and Grunig (1999) define the strategy of *networking* as building alliances with the same groups that the strategic public of organizations do, such as NGOs, unions, and communities. The networks can be formed by establishing conversations, exchanging information, and economic trades. Actors of these interchanges include individuals, other organizations, and nations (Ki & Hon, 2009). This strategy is considered a catalyst in relationship building in more collectivist societies (Ki, 2014).

Finally, *assurances* is a strategy that implies reassuring stakeholders of the importance of their relationship with the organization, the commitment to maintain this relationship, and that their concerns will be addressed (Ki & Hon, 2009; Ki, 2014). Some concrete actions that reflect the use of this strategy are providing personal responses, expressing the importance of the public, and considering concerns seriously (Ki & Hon, 2009). In their study about relationship cultivation strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, Huang et al. (2022) identified a preference of collectivist cultures for the assurance strategy, using tactics like creating emotional attachments and displaying care.

The works conducted by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ki (2014) involving relationship cultivation strategies are mainly theoretical, but later studies have applied these strategies when analyzing social media platforms like Facebook (O'Neil, 2014) or Weibo (Huang et al., 2021). Therefore, these strategies will be considered in the present study.

Since the relationship cultivation strategies described by Ki (2014) do not refer specifically to digital media, it is necessary to contemplate other variations of these tactics that could be applied in social media communication. In this case, Men and Tsai (2012) recognize three relationship cultivation strategies explicitly applied to the case of digital communication. These include openness and disclosure, information dissemination, and interactivity and involvement. Despite their relationship with the strategies defined by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ki (2014), Men and Tsai (2012) identify specific features related to the use of the internet. First, social media represents a convenient way for organizations to disclose information like their mission and goals to stakeholders with an online presence. Second, the information-

dissemination strategy considers the needs and interests of stakeholders and spreads information about the organization to motivate the public's engagement. This can be done through videos, posts, external links, and other digital announcements. Third, interactivity represents a crucial advantage of social media platforms, which can be used to navigate, contact the firm, make recommendations to other social media users, and respond to organizational digital content (Men & Tsai, 2012). In spite of being more accurate when studying Instagram posts, these online relationship cultivation strategies identified by Men and Sai (2012) are limited compared to those identified by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ki (2014). The firsts do not consider factors like positive communication or sharing tasks with stakeholders. For that reason, the present study will consider online-specific strategies and original relationship cultivation strategies (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014). These will serve to analyze museums' communication on social media during the pandemic, thereby answering SQ1.

2.1.1.2. Dialogic Communication

Besides relationship cultivation theory and its strategies, another thesis that addresses relationship maintenance in digital media is dialogic communication or dialogic theory, which "refers to any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 325). The critical concept in dialogic communication is dialogue, which can be used in public relations strategies by constructing relationships that are interpersonal, mediated, and organizational (Wang & Yang, 2020). Since Kent and Taylor reintroduced dialogue in public relations in 1998, studies have focused on digital mediated communication, limiting the concept of dialogue to strategies related to website design and social media features (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Despite the theoretical limitation, the dialogue's connection with defined social media features can ease the identification of dialogical organization strategies in daily public relations practices (Wang & Yang, 2020).

Moreover, Kent and Taylor (2002) proposed the dialogic theory of public relations, which indicates that firms should interact with stakeholders ethically and honestly to create effective strategic communication channels (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Wang & Yang, 2020). This theory introduces five distinguishing features that will be considered in the present research: mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. Even though these attributes are not always identifiable within social media communication, they will be considered when developing the codebook for a more in-depth analysis of museums communication on Instagram.

Mutuality entails recognizing an existing relationship between an organization and the public and acknowledging that these two actors are closely intertwined. It also involves the collaborative nature of this relationship and the equality between parts (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020). *Propinquity* means that the public's opinion on important matters is considered. Additionally, it relates to spontaneous and real-time interactions with the public. The third feature, *empathy*, represents how the organization supports the objectives and interests of the public. Also known as sympathy, this feature creates an atmosphere of affirmation necessary for dialogue to succeed. It implies facilitating the public's participation by creating open meetings and making materials available for everyone. Empathy also entails a communal orientation guided by the current digital globalization and acknowledging the value of all stakeholders (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020).

The *risk* feature relates to the possible perils assumed by dialogue actors. These risks can bring dangerous consequences or rewards and are present in every relationship (Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020). Moreover, risks imply participants' vulnerability due to self-disclosure, an openness to change, and the recognition of the uniqueness of each actor (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020). Finally, *commitment* refers to "the degree to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics" (Wang & Yang, 2020, p.2). This entails an honest and forthright dialogue, a pledge to establish mutually beneficial conversations, and a commitment to understanding all parties involved in the dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2002). As previously mentioned, some of these features, like risk, are not easily identifiable in a social media content analysis but can serve as guidelines to detect more evident or explicit communicational characteristics.

Due to the interactive nature of social media, the use of these platforms can end in dialogue, making it necessary to study this communication from a dialogical perspective. The dialogic theory has five principles of communication that firms can apply to promote dialogue and open communication with stakeholders (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). These principles have the limitation of being developed considering websites as organizational tools but have since been applied to other digital instruments like social media (Bilgilier & Kocaömer, 2020; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Huang et al., 2021; Men et al., 2018; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017; Wang & Yang, 2020). However, Men et al. (2018) claim that organizations do not exploit the total dialogic capacity of social media. Instead, firms mainly use social platforms for information dissemination.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to study if the situation caused by the pandemic changed how organizations use dialogic principles. These are ease of interface, conservation of visitors, generation of return visits, providing helpful information to various publics, and maintaining a dialogic loop (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). These principles were identified in the Instagram posts published by the selected art museums. However, ease of interface was not contemplated as Instagram's interface is standard for all organizational accounts. Dialogic principles offer a more practical guideline that, alongside the relationship cultivation strategies, will be considered to develop the codebook for analysis.

The principle of *conservation of visitors* refers to keeping the public within the organization's social profile or website and not driving visitors astray. Examples of this are providing links to other of their social profiles or website and avoiding sponsored advertising. *Generation of return visits* entails providing attractive features that motivate the public to continuously return to the organization's social media platforms and website. This can include sharing updated information and links with additional information or news related to the company (Ki & Hon, 2009; Men et al., 2018; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020). *Usefulness of information* implies how organizational communication on social media provides information that satisfies the public's needs and is of general value to the audience. This principle can comprise press releases, speeches, or statements from the company, including its mission and goals, details on participating in corporate events, and summaries of its activities and history. These elements are not always found in social media communication, but due to the situation caused by the pandemic, the present research will also consider any possible statement published by the museums on Instagram. Information about the pandemic, closure, and reopening of their facilities, as well as events, history, and mission, will be examined. Finally, the *dialogic loop* creates opportunities for users to provide feedback and resolve doubts. This can involve replying to users' comments, supplying surveys where users can express their opinions, the use of hashtags, tagging individuals or other organizations to foment conversation, and the request to leave a comment or ask a question (Ki & Hon, 2009; Men et al., 2018; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020).

Previous research has determined that organizations rely mainly on one-way dialogic principles, such as the usefulness of information and generation of return visits (Men et al., 2018; Wang & Yang, 2020; Watkins, 2017). This included increasingly relying on pictures to capture the public's attention and providing valuable and interesting links and additional information. Therefore, despite the ability of social media to enable two-way communication between the organization and the public, interactive characteristics are underutilized by firms. However, Watkins' (2017) findings also indicate that social media users tended to engage with

public figures or organizations when they published helpful information. Then, one-way communication was just as effective in generating engagement and creating a positive relationship between the public and the organization. The present research will identify whether museums relied more on one-way communication or if they designed their communication on Instagram focused on prioritizing two-way communication.

Authors like Sundstrom and Levenshus (2017) recognize the usefulness of identifying dialogic principles but claim that a wider lens is needed to identify overarching patterns and strategies. That is why the present research will aim for a more comprehensive approach, considering several theories and providing space for a partial inductive analysis. Additionally, Sundstrom and Levenshus (2017) argue that these principles can be used together to foster engagement, thus creating overarching strategies such as promoting the organization as industry leaders or integrating all social media platforms. Therefore, the present study will identify patterns that could reflect these principles' separate or joined use.

The stated relationship cultivation strategies and dialogic principles will be connected to specific literature about museum communication to conduct the analysis, examining possible overlapping between theories.

2.2. Public Engagement on Social Media

According to Taylor and Kent (2014), engagement can be considered an orientation that shapes interactions but also an approach that guides how groups interact. At an organizational level, engagement serves as a way in which firms and their stakeholders can make decisions together and, in doing so, build social capital. Despite the focus of this research on public relations and cultural institutions, it is necessary to consider the concept of consumer brand engagement as a reference due to its relevance in the use of social media (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020). Consumer brand engagement, or CBE, is understood as "a consumer's positively valence brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions" (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). Engagement is the product of the interactive experience of an individual or public with a focal object, like an organization. It entails what the public feels about an organization's content and what it does about it. Therefore, engagement includes actions like searching for content, commenting, and sharing (Calder et al., 2009; Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Due to the interactive nature of social media, these digital platforms have become one of the primary channels of consumer engagement. CBE is a multidimensional concept that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020). These indicators are also considered in other fields, like culture and education. Like that of Budge and

Burness (2018), previous research links engagement to education and focuses on understanding how engagement can affect learning. This is relevant in the context of informal learning, such as in the case of museums. The social aspect of social media platforms can motivate individuals to connect with a topic and deepen their knowledge (Budge & Burness, 2018).

Previous theory also connects public relations to social media engagement and the participatory culture derived from online platforms, as these last two are influential in cultivating and maintaining relationships (Smith & Gallicano, 2015; Taylor & Kent, 2014). These platforms have allowed individuals to engage proactively with organizations by creating content, liking, sharing, and commenting on organizational communication, thus prompting a transition from one-way communication to an active user involvement (Men & Tsai, 2012; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). The current operating environment requires firms to be open to the value that surges from interactions with various stakeholders (Johnston, 2014). Therefore, studying how the public engages with organizational communication becomes necessary. Authors like Cho et al. (2017) recognize three levels of engagement on Facebook: share, like, and comment. These tools are also present on Instagram. Commenting is, in this case, considered the highest level of engagement as it entails a more significant effort and implies a direct engagement with the firm and the rest of the public that follows the organization's social media content (Cho et al., 2017).

However, other authors recognize engagement as a more complex phenomenon, as it requires from the organization the understanding of stakeholders and the commitment to build a dialogue with the strategic public (Johnston, 2014; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Therefore, Smith and Gallicano (2015) propose four engagement activities: information consumption, sense of presence, interest immersion, and social interaction. These activities can provide a deeper understanding of how engagement manifests beyond the three levels identified by Cho et al. (2017). Therefore, they will be considered during the analysis. *Information consumption* refers to the search and use of information online. This activity facilitates other engagement actions, embodies the ease of constantly connecting, and allows individuals to become experts in their fields of interest. Examples of this activity include consuming information and participating in generating content and information. *Sense of presence* entails acknowledging being involved in the experience created by social media, including the time and the attention invested in these digital platforms. It implies assessing the engagement experience by evaluating aspects like the entertaining value or the cognitive investment. The third activity, *interest immersion*, refers to how social media content can lead to the self-expression of the public in order to fulfill an emotional need. The audience can immerse itself into a particular

topic and find inspiration or social or civic relevance. Finally, the last activity is *social interactivity*. Social media platforms facilitate interpersonal connections. Individuals may use social media to share experiences, win the approval of others, or find like-minded people (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). The present research will analyze a range of comments extracted from each selected Instagram post, considering how or if these activities are reflected. This research will focus on comments identified as the highest level of engagement by Cho et al. (2017).

Most previous literature related to engagement on Instagram is quantitative and focuses on commercial brands or organizations (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020) or personal accounts of influencers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). In their study of luxury brands, Oliveira and Fernandes (2020) found out that consumers tend to engage with brands on social media with the goal of self-expressing and that individuals that engage with brands are more likely to be loyal to the brand and have a good image of the organization. These findings agree with Smith and Gallicano's (2015) engagement activity of interest immersion.

The study by Tafesse and Wood (2021) centered on quantitative elements like follower count or content volume, which are not directly related to this study. However, one of its findings indicated a relationship between engagement and domains of interest. The more diverse the topics of the digital content, the higher the engagement. Therefore, novelty and variety have a positive effect on engagement. It is necessary to see if this translates to cultural institutions' digital channels.

In the specific case of museums, previous research has recognized the focus of these cultural institutions in engaging the public through their collections and exhibits while adopting technological changes to match the visitors' expectations (Budge & Burness, 2018). In their study about museums' reputations, van Riel and Heijndijk (2017) acknowledge that most people, 79%, have a favorable impression and high degree of appreciation for museums. In fact, museums score higher in reputation than other types of organizations. According to van Riel and Heijndijk (2017), the museums that experienced more criticism were institutions from countries like China or Brazil, but this did not affect Western European museums, which are the object of study of the present research.

2.3. Museum's Digital Transformation

2.3.1. Goals and Missions of Art Museums

An organization's mission statement can be considered the starting point in its strategy, guiding its actions and communication (Paulus, 2010). As cultural institutions,

museums have two duties. First, take care of the material they contain and, second, make this material available to anyone who wants to see it. However, there has been a shift in museums' goals toward the audience. Their prime responsibility or mission has become to serve the public by reaching wider audiences, creating ties with the communities, and becoming an alternative for other sources of entertainment and education (Elgammal et al., 2020; Jacobsen, 2014; Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Marini & Agostino, 2021). For example, in its mission statement, the Louvre Museum establishes that one of its priorities is to make the visitors feel welcome (Le Louvre Museum, n.d.). The British Museum also recognizes how its collection allows the public to explore the human culture and help it discover how closely human beings are interconnected (The British Museum, n.d.). Then, museums are looking for ways to attain these new missions or goals to satisfy their visitors, achieve greater visibility, and raise their income (Kotler & Kotler, 2000).

The present research will also consider how cultural factors affect the selected museums' strategic communication and goals. In their study about art museums' reputations, van Riel and Heijndijk (2017) identified the traits in which each selected museum stands out. These attributes could be linked with cultural factors, as they reflect how the museums promote themselves and visitors perceive them. The traits established by van Riel and Heijndijk (2017), which reflect different reputation drivers like innovation, governance, and leadership, range from having an attractive, unique, and inspiring collection to being open about their activities, having a positive influence on society and having a clear vision for the future. In the specific case of the selected museums for the present study, the Louvre Museum was mainly recognized for its collection's quality, its role as a leader in the museum world, and its contribution to society. In the case of The British Museum, the institution stands out for its professionality and attractive collection. Finally, the Rijksmuseum is distinguished by its collection, social relevance, innovation, and quality workplace (van Riel & Heijndijk, 2017).

2.3.2. Museums' Public Relation Strategies and the Use of Digital Technology

Kotler and Kotler (2000) propose three strategies that museums can follow to achieve public relations-related goals: improving the museum-going experience, community service, and a market repositioning towards entertainment. These strategies are not mutually exclusive and can be combined to reach the audience and competitive goals. First, the strategy of *improving the museum-going experience* for visitors implies offering varied and richer exhibits and activities, improving the museum services, and providing comfortable and accessible facilities. Moreover, this strategy also involves fomenting the public's participation, creating multisensory and immersive experiences, offering guidance in extensive exhibits, and

improving contact with the staff (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). Digital technology has also shaped the museum experience, as it offers new possibilities to interact with visitors, creates augmented events, and offers access to the collections, even offsite (Marini & Agostino, 2021). This is especially relevant in exceptional situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when the public could not visit museums. Additionally, Kotler and Kotler (2000) recognize that recreational and social experiences represent a relevant factor for visitors in the case of the European public. Therefore, diversion and enjoyment are relevant aspects of the museum visit (He et al., 2018; Kotler & Kotler, 2000).

The second strategy, *community service*, highlights expanding the museum's role in the community by celebrating the community's heritage and history and contributing to its economic development (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). Museums have aimed to be relevant in present day society and be agents of social change (Morse & Munro, 2015). Therefore, this strategy includes the educational role of these cultural institutions, partnerships with local organizations, and creating a link with younger generations and minorities. An exceptional situation like the COVID-19 pandemic then allows museums to carry out this strategy and keep in close contact with the community (Tan & Tan, 2021). For example, in their research, Tan and Tan (2021) identified the effort of museums in Singapore to use digital technology to offer an alternative to social isolation and care for the well-being of their public. Currently, museums have also tried to become an essential part of the community, fostering a sense of local identity (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Morse & Munro, 2015). Due to the international relevance of the selected museums and the globalizing role of social media, it could be argued that the role in the community has expanded to a more national or even international level (Schroeder, 2019).

Finally, the third strategy, *market repositioning towards entertainment*, relates to redesigning the museum facilities and activities to attract new public and compete with other leisure activities. This repositioning can involve completely transforming the museum's core activities, like exhibiting and conserving, and considering the community's needs regarding entertainment (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). Digital technology, and features like gaming, can also be used as tools for entertainment and attracting new visitors. Agostino and Arnaboldi (2020) recognize this as a phase in museum history, known as Digital Period, where entertainment is used as a mediator between knowledge and enjoyment. Assessing how these strategies and museums' goals can be implemented and achieved in a digital environment induced by the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary. Therefore, this research will consider how these core strategies were applied on Instagram during the pandemic, while museums were closed to the public, and when museums reopened.

Not only digital tools and social media can be used to fulfill the public-related goals of art museums, but these technologies can also transform how museums maintain a relationship with their public. Marini and Agostino (2021) identified a shift in how museums build relationships with visitors due to the availability of digital tools. These have added a dialogic perspective, enriched the visitor's experience by offering the possibility of a hybrid visit, and even substituted, in some cases, onsite visiting (Marini & Agostino, 2021). Therefore, digital technologies have affected the cultural experience, understood as the totality of activities and events in which the visitor participates (Agostino et al., 2020; Marini & Agostino, 2021). However, it is necessary to note that the studies conducted by Agostino et al. (2020) and Marini and Agostino (2021) are limited to the Italian context and do not center on Instagram as a digital channel. Consequently, examining how this reliance on digital tools has shaped other museums and cultural contexts is essential.

Expressly Instagram and other social media platforms have permitted museums to use a mass communication tool that allows them to interact and be visible to millions of social media users, thus broadening the reach of their cultural offer (Agostino et al., 2020; Vrana et al., 2021). Among the benefits of social media are the increase in public engagement, the building of communities, more meaningful connections with visitors, and speed of communication (Fletcher & Lee, 2012; Vrana et al., 2021). Social media also allows museums to showcase their collections, reflect their mission and core values, and keep the public updated about events and activities (Vrana et al., 2021). In the case of Instagram, previous studies have mainly focused on the visitor and how they express their connection with a collection or exhibit through Instagram (Budge & Burness, 2018; Burge, 2017; Suess, 2018) but have left aside organizational communication.

However, Lazaridou et al. (2017) and Vrana et al. (2021) have analyzed how the most visited museums use Instagram. Lazaridou et al. (2017) focused on quantitative indicators such as the number of followers, posts, and visitors. The findings of this study indicate a positive correlation between the number of followers and the number of posts, as museums aim to meet the needs of their followers by providing updated information, photos, and videos. At the same time, a higher number of followers is related to a higher number of visitors, indicating that museums can use Instagram to attract more public. Vrana et al. (2021) conducted a network analysis, which concluded that the museums with the most relevant role on Instagram are the British Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Rijksmuseum, and the Louvre. Therefore, these institutions represent an example and inspiration to other museums regarding strategic communication in this social media. However, these studies of museum communication on Instagram are quantitative, making it necessary to conduct a more in-depth

analysis to determine how museums construct meaning and through which kind of content they can create value for the public.

2.3.3. Art Museums During the COVID-19 Pandemic

To stop the spread of COVID-19, governments across the globe took a series of measures, including the closure of public spaces like art museums (Burke et al., 2020). Museums proactively responded to the pandemic by assisting the communities in need and donating medical supplies to hospitals. Moreover, they reinforced their digital services to help lonely and isolated individuals and continued fulfilling their educational role (Network of European Museum Organizations [NEMO], 2020). In a survey conducted during the first months of the pandemic, NEMO (2020) determined that 80% of museums had expanded their use of digital technologies by providing new online services. This, in turn, generated an increase in online visits, which in some cases grew by 150%. Of the variety of online tools used during this period, the most popular was social media. The use of these platforms increased by more than 70% compared to the period before the pandemic's start. In their study of Italian museums during the lockdown, Agostino et al. (2020) noted that the number of posts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram increased. Additionally, Instagram became the social media that experienced the most significant growth during the health crisis.

Authors like Tranta et al. (2021) and Corona (2021) claim that the pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of museums. Before the pandemic, museums relied on social media to communicate events, initiatives, and exhibits that took place physically and onsite. Due to COVID-19, social media became the primary tool to spread cultural material, developing digital initiatives to reach a wider audience, such as virtual tours, interviews with directors, quizzes, and descriptions of artworks (Agostino et al., 2020; Burke et al., 2020). Digital initiatives were critical in the case of temporary exhibits, as art pieces are expected to be in the museums for a limited period (Burke et al., 2020). In a case study, Burke et al. (2020) grouped these initiatives into three categories: replicating the museum experience, replacing the museum experience using online platforms, and building a different relationship with audiences.

Some museums, like the Stavanger Art Museum, opted to try to replicate an in-site museum visit by focusing on the physical installation. For example, this museum live-streamed a video through social media, where its director walked around a temporary exhibit and showed the installation process. This visual material prompted the public to visit the exhibit once museums reopened (Burke et al., 2020). Other museums preferred to keep their temporary exhibits online during the lockdown, thus replacing the physical experience with an

extensive, digital exhibition. This was the case of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, which transformed the exhibition "Rembrandt and Amsterdam portraiture, 1590-1670" into an immersive digital-only experience (Burke et al., 2020; NEMO, 2020). Finally, other museums created a new relationship with their public by inviting visitors to be creative contributors to the museum. This includes initiatives like 'The Getty Museum Challenge' and the 'Tussen kusten en quarantine' (Between art and quarantine), where the public was invited to make its version of the paintings with objects and clothes they could find at home. Another initiative was the #MuseumsUnlocked, where visitors were asked to share pictures taken when the museums were still open, to set aside the traditional curatorial voice, and give the public the space to be curators of the museum's collections (Burke et al., 2020). Other hashtags, such as #MuseumFromHome, #ArtYouReady, and #ArtInQuarantine, were also developed to establish a new relationship with the audience (Agostino et al., 2020; Tranta et al., 2021).

These digital initiatives adopted by museums worldwide had a positive reception from the public, as social media created new opportunities to disseminate culture and reach the public beyond museums' physical spaces. Therefore, museums like the Louvre have maintained active participation of the public, despite the closures caused by COVID-19 (Corona, 2021). Agostino et al. (2020) recognize three different approaches to connecting with the public during the pandemic. First is a one-way educational approach, where museums give material to the public, such as interviews with members of the staff or the story of an art piece. The second is an asynchronous interaction in which the museum proposes an activity or provides information, but the public is not required to respond in real-time, for example, in a quiz. Finally, the third approach is a real-time or synchronous interaction, where two-way communication occurs, such as a live stream. The present research will consider previous findings by Burke et al. (2020) and Agostino et al. (2020) to identify the initiatives and approaches used by museums and determine how they transformed the traditional museum experience, thus providing an answer to SQ4.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

The present study employs exploratory and descriptive qualitative content analysis. This method was used to examine the Instagram posts of the accounts of three art museums: The Louvre Museum, the Rijksmuseum, and the British Museum. This methodology was also utilized to observe the reactions of Instagram users to the selected posts, specifically, the comments on each post. Qualitative content analysis is a method used to systematically describe and discern the meaning of recorded human communications by classifying the material into codes or categories (Babbie, 2017; Schreier, 2014). This method has the advantage that it reduces large amounts of data into its essential aspects in order to provide an answer to the research question. Additionally, it is a flexible method that combines data-driven and concept-driven approaches, prioritizing the material studied over methodological constraints (Schreier, 2014). Therefore, it constitutes a convenient method to study a recent and still understudied topic, as is museum communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, according to Babbie (2017), qualitative content analysis is an appropriate way to study digital communications and answer questions regarding what and how something is communicated.

Qualitative methodology enables an in-depth understanding of meaning-making processes, as is the case of the strategic communication of art museums on social media (Brennen, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Moreover, this methodology allows studying how social media audiences interpret these communicational efforts, thus permitting a rich understanding of how the public engages on digital platforms. The exploratory nature of this research is justified by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as this proposed research will generate insights into how cultural institutions use Instagram to maintain relationships with their audience during exceptional situations like a pandemic (Jupp, 2006).

The use of secondary data, Instagram posts, and comments, is a helpful method in studying recorded human communication, as it reflects evident and latent meanings (Babbie, 2017; Benoit, 2020). Using secondary data also eliminates the possibilities of ethical concerns, as the information analyzed comes from public sources and is widely available. Additionally, in the present research, it is a feasible and adequate tool to understand art museums' strategic communication (Babbie, 2017).

3.2. Sample and Sampling Strategy

The present research relies on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling implies selecting a sample considering what elements will be representative or more beneficial for the research, according to the researcher's judgment (Babbie, 2017). Considering that this study aims to understand museums' Instagram communication related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is logical to choose the sample purposively, to select only content connected to this topic. A simple sampling strategy like simple random sampling could result in an irrelevant dataset to answer the proposed research question. First, to select the art museums to be studied, this study considered the reputational ranking of the 18 most famous art museums (van Riel & Heijndijk, 2017). Three museums from the top five were selected from this list: the Louvre Museum, the Rijksmuseum, and the British Museum. The reach of this study was limited to three museums for feasibility reasons, considering that this number of institutions is sufficient for an exploratory study (Babbie, 2017). This limited sample served to test the feasibility of a more extensive study in the future.

In addition to van Riel and Heijndijk's ranking (2017), the previous study conducted by Vrana et al. (2021) was considered to complete the museum selection. According to this research, the British Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Rijksmuseum, and the Louvre have relevant roles on Instagram and serve as inspiration to other museums. Therefore, the museums identified in both studies (van Riel & Heijndijk, 2017; Vrana et al., 2021) were selected for the present study.

The criteria for selecting these museums also included the language used on the Instagram account and the country of origin. Given that English is a globalized language, posting social media content in English allows museums to reach wider audiences. Thus, only museums that published their content in English were selected. Additionally, the selection consisted of only one museum per country for comparative cultural purposes.

The social media platform selected for this research is Instagram, as it is a visually rich tool that aligns with the visual material that art museums contain (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono, 2019; Brands et al., 2021). Moreover, Instagram has experienced increasing popularity, with more than a billion users worldwide (Statista, 2021). More than 70% of organizations have also started using this social media platform to build their corporate image and communicate and interact with stakeholders (Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono, 2019).

The sample for the present research consists of 150 Instagram posts and 1500 comments published by users on the selected posts. The size of the samples was considered sufficient for the scope of the present research and provided data saturation. Fifty posts were selected from each museum for the Instagram posts. These included five videos per museum

to include as many initiatives and communicational strategies as possible. The selected videos ranged from approximately 25 seconds to four minutes. The posts were chosen through purposive sampling from the content published between the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and August 2020. They consisted of posts that address COVID-19, its effects on the museum's functioning, or initiatives to engage the audience during the pandemic and the museum's closure and reopening. The selected time frame covers the strategic communication of art museums during different phases of the pandemic, including a hard lockdown and periods of de-escalation of the COVID-19 measures and the reopening of museums (Redel-Macías et al., 2021).

Additionally, ten comments were chosen from each post for analysis, totaling 1500. The comments were selected using the comment picker software Phantom Buster, which automatically selected groups of 10 successive comments per post. Only comments that were posted a maximum of one month after the publication of the Instagram content were selected, to reflect the reactions of the audience during the first six months of the pandemic. After this automatic selection, every comment was checked individually to avoid collection mistakes. Simple random sampling was not used as a collection method in the case of the comments, as, after a thorough overview of the data, it was determined that the selected data were representative of the totality of comments. Additionally, doubled comments were eliminated, and replies to other comments were not considered. The comments were selected in every language, and a translation tool was used to translate the comments when needed. Allowing for comments in different languages more accurately reflects the museums' followership and the public engagement on Instagram.

3.3. Data Collection

All the published Instagram posts from the selected time frame were considered during data collection. The posts were chosen according to their content. Posts with explicit references to the pandemic were considered for the study, as well as posts with mentions of keywords like reopening, closing, quarantine, and lockdown. Hashtags also served as a selection guide. Therefore, posts with hashtags such as #MuseumFromHome, #StayAtHome, #StaySafe, #StayAtHomeChallenge were considered. These hashtags were extracted from previous studies by Agostino et al. (2020), Burke et al. (2020), and Tranta et al. (2021).

Additionally, any initiative created by museums during the pandemic to maintain their connection with the public was also considered. These included virtual experiences, games, home learning tools, and participation activities. Moreover, hashtags that introduced social media campaigns created by museums during the pandemic were also examined. Some

examples of these hashtags identified during the data collection are #LouvreDetails, #RijksmuseumFromHome, #LouvreChezVous, #VirtualVisit, and #CultureInQuarantine. Finally, this study also contemplated posts that refer to the museum's reopening. Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 include a representative post from each selected museum.

During data collection, each post's visual element (image or video) was downloaded and renamed to organize it for analysis. Table 3.1 shows the nomenclature used to classify each of the posts selected. The accompanying texts or captions, including emojis and hashtags, were collected from each post and included in a Word file later introduced in Atlas.ti for analysis. The content was prioritized in the selection of the posts. However, posts from each month of the defined time range were included. A minimum of four and a maximum of 13 posts per month were selected. The variation in the number of posts chosen per month depends on the COVID-19 restrictions experienced by each museum and the date of their reopening, as once they reopened, fewer initiatives directly related to the pandemic were introduced on social media.

The user comments selected from each post were collected, including tags, hashtags, and emojis. Alongside the content of the comments, additional information was also gathered. This included the user's name and link to the Instagram post to which each comment belongs. This information facilitated the posterior analysis.

After data cleaning, the Instagram posts and comments data were introduced in the software Atlas.ti for analysis.

Table 3.1

Organization and Nomenclature of the Selected Instagram Posts

Selected museum	Nomenclature of data
Rijksmuseum	R1 to R50
British Museum	B1 to B50
Louvre Museum	L1 to L50

Note. When the posts have more than one image, a letter was added to identify the individual image. Example: B2_A, B2_B, B2_C, etc.

3.4. Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

To ensure the validity of the present research, a codebook was developed considering a wide range of previous theories regarding strategic communication and public engagement on social media. Therefore, the results and findings are well supported by literature, thus

providing criterion-related validity to the study (Babbie, 2017). Moreover, the present research also counts with face validity, as selecting posts referred to the pandemic or published during the start of the pandemic represents a quality indicator to reasonably measure how museums used Instagram to cultivate the relationship with their public during this period (Babbie, 2017).

The present study is reliable as it clearly establishes the steps and criteria used to collect the data and conduct the analysis (Babbie, 2017). Additionally, using an automatic tool to collect the comments guarantees no human error in the collection. These two elements facilitate the replicability of the present research. However, it is necessary to consider that reliability is to be approached differently in a qualitative study due to the complexity of social phenomena, which causes research not to be entirely consistent (Payne & Payne, 2004). For this reason, it is necessary to rely on the researcher's reflexivity and define clearly how the research was executed (Payne & Payne, 2004).

Figure 3.1
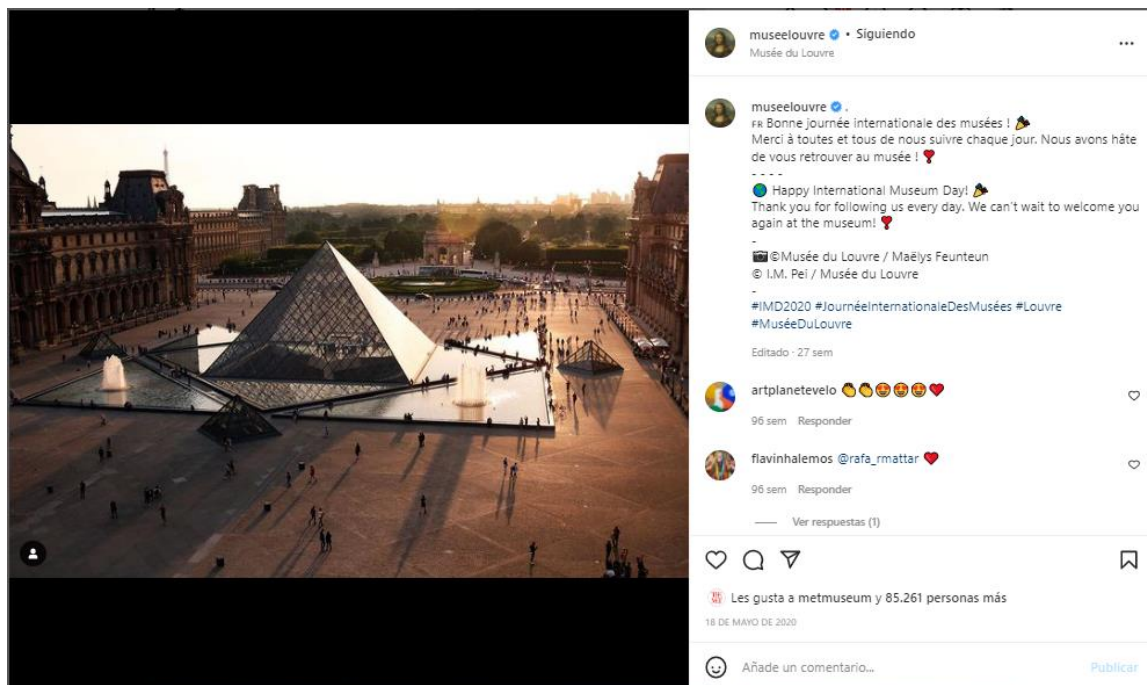
Representative Instagram Post of the Rijksmuseum (R45_A)

Figure 3.2

Representative Instagram Post of the British Museum (B17)

Figure 3.3

Representative Instagram Post of the Louvre Museum (L31)

As an individual researcher analyzed the data, there is the possible limitation of researcher bias. However, this bias can be minimized by supporting the analysis on previous theory and developing a clear codebook (Chapman, 2014). Furthermore, using triangulated

data also serves to reduce possible bias. This is the case of this study, which analyzes two different data sources, Instagram posts and Instagram comments (Chapman, 2014). The qualitative nature of the present study allows for reflexivity, considering the social position and assumptions of the researcher, as well as limitations concerning language and lack of national context when interpreting the analyzed data (Byrne, 2017). The acknowledgment of these limitations and views also helped reduce possible biases.

Finally, one of the advantages of the present research is the lack of ethical concerns. By relying on secondary data, publicly and widely available, this study discards any shadow of unethical methodology (Babbie, 2017).

3.5. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data as it is a flexible methodology that enabled the identification of patterns and common elements concerning strategic communication used by art museums on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic (Allen, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Mills et al., 2010). Thematic analysis is also recommended for analyzing underexplored topics, as is the case in this research. Moreover, as a qualitative method, thematic analysis offers a richer understanding of communicational processes, as is the case of Instagram posts and user comments (Allen, 2017).

Two coding frames were developed: for the analysis of the Instagram posts and the comments. These coding frames considered previous theory and sensitizing concepts such as the relationship cultivation strategies (Ki, 2014; Men & Tsai, 2012), the principles of dialogic communication (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010), the digital initiatives adopted by museums (Burke et al., 2020), and public engagement activities (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). These coding frames or codebooks guided the coding process and analysis. However, this research took a partly deductive approach, meaning that during coding, new findings that did not fit in previous theories were also considered (Given, 2008). The codebook was modified after the analysis was completed to include the codes and themes identified inductively.

This research applied the three coding steps of thematic analysis, open, axial, and selective coding. First, the data was broken down into initial categories using a data-driven approach (Boeije, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Given, 2008). This process was conducted twice separately for the Instagram posts and the Instagram comments. In this first step of the process, the unit of analysis was individual sentences for the Instagram posts dataset and the whole comment for the comments dataset. Additionally, for the images in the Instagram posts dataset, the entire picture was considered, as well as details or specific parts of the image. In the case of the 15 videos analyzed, the open codes were assigned to the video segments that

constituted a scene (defined by a change of time or location) or by topics addressed. Out of each unit of analysis, all possible open codes were identified regarding topics discussed directly, the text's purpose, emojis, and hashtags. In the case of the images and videos, the open codes were assigned according to what was visually identifiable. For example, colors used, elements portrayed, the number of figures, and activities represented. Appendix B includes a selection of coded quotes to illustrate the open coding process. This open coding resulted in 1095 open codes for the Instagram posts and 520 for the comments.

Second, common or similar codes were grouped and categorized into axial codes or subgroups, resulting in 114 subgroups for the Instagram posts data and 44 subgroups for the comments data. Less relevant or less frequent open codes were left out of the subgroups. These subgroups were joined together and reconstructed to develop potential themes. These themes were inductively identified and, in part, theory-driven, thus using a mix of deductive and inductive approaches. Finally, the subgroups were reviewed in relation to the initial codes and dataset, refined, and grouped into themes used to answer the research question and sub-questions. This process resulted in 19 themes for the Instagram Posts dataset, used to answer SQ1, SQ2, and SQ4, and six themes from the comments dataset used to answer SQ3. Finally, the final themes were named and clearly defined, increasing reliability (Appendix C) (Boeije, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Given, 2008).

4. Results

4.1. Strategies to Generate Public Engagement

To answer the first sub-question regarding the communicational strategies implemented to generate public engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, eight themes were identified. These were: Humanize museum, Interactivity, Entertainment, Positivity, Emphasis on physicality, Prioritize safety and health, Expanding reach/networking, and Social and economic pillar (see Figure 4.1). These themes represent the various strategies museums relied on to engage with the public. Some of the recognized themes coincide with previous theories, such as positivity (Ki, 2014) and entertainment (Kotler & Kotler, 2000), while other themes contain aspects of previous literature but are not fully explained by it. The first seven themes will be explained further in the following subsections.

Figure 4.1

Summary Graphic of the Identified Themes for Sub-Question 1
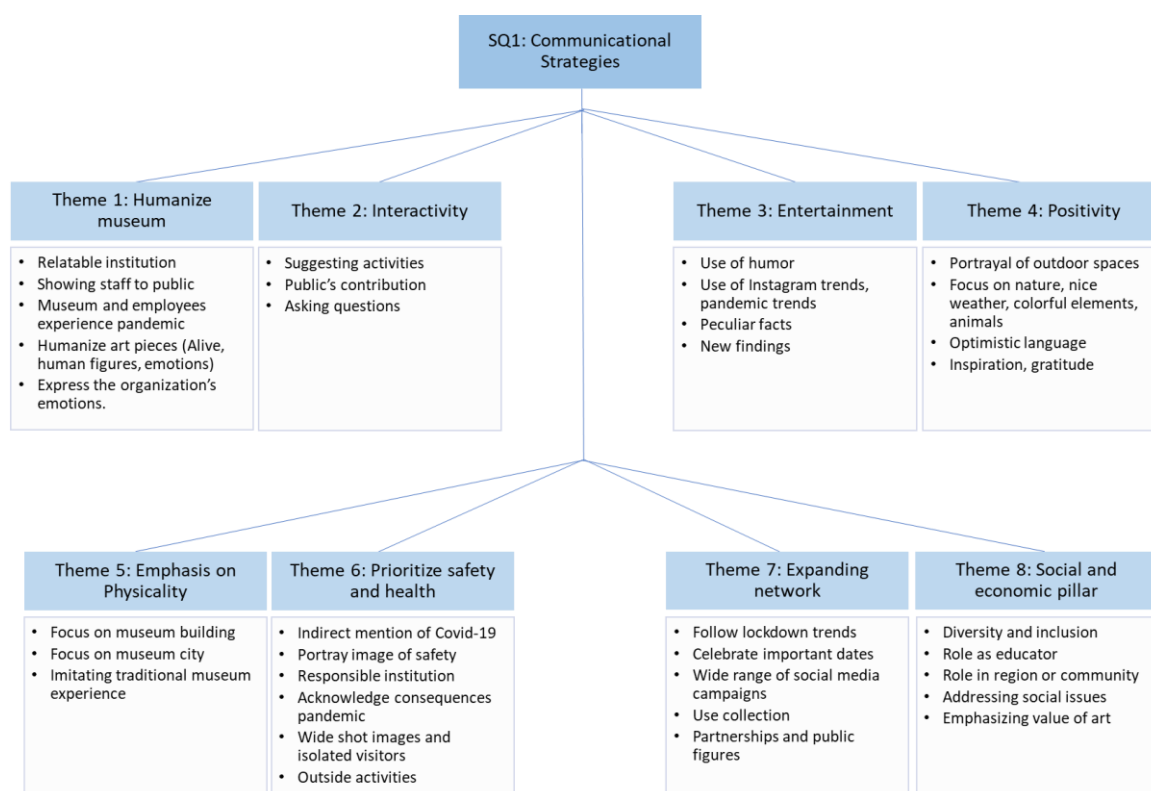
4.1.1. Humanize museum

The first identified communicational strategy that museums used to generate public engagement during the first six months of the pandemic was to present the museums as humanized institutions. This theme contained the following subgroups: Creating connections

between art and the public, Getting to know the staff, Getting to know the organization, Humanizing art, Portraying humans, Expressing emotions, Welcoming the public, Dramatism, Missing the public, and Asking for the public support. Even though this theme is not fully addressed in previous literature, it shows connections with the relationship cultivation strategy of openness and disclosure (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014), as it implies the organization expressing their feelings and thoughts, as well as the emotions and opinions of employees. However, this strategy does not contemplate the humanization of material elements (art pieces) or creating an emotional connection with an object, as is the case of the identified theme. Furthermore, this theme can also be connected with empathy, one of the features of dialogic communication. One of the indicators of empathy is acknowledging stakeholders' value, as is in this case with employees and the public (Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020).

In general, the three selected museums aimed to present a more relatable institution to the public to generate more empathy and, thus, more engagement. The present research will center on three ways this humanization was applied. First, the selected museums, especially the Rijksmuseum and British Museum, emphasized showing their employees to the public. These included pictures of employees working, sharing employees' preferences, stating the value of the staff's work, having employees explain art pieces to the public, and showing a glimpse of the staff's personal life, especially when employees had to work from home (see Figure 4.2). The goal was to demonstrate to the public that the museum is formed not only by the art pieces it contains but also by the people working there. This strategy also showed the public how the museum and its employees have experienced the consequences of the pandemic, including the closure. An example of this is the initiative presented by the Rijksmuseum with a series of videos called #Rijksmuseumfromhome, where employees from different departments explained an art piece of the museum from their home and connected it to their domestic environment (see Figure 4.3). Additionally, employees shared personal anecdotes or information, making them more relatable to the public.

Another way the museums presented a humanized figure to the public was to humanize their art pieces and treat them as if they were alive. By humanizing art, the public can feel a deeper connection to the paintings and sculptures in the museums. This was achieved by providing closer shots into characters' faces, narrating the characters' lives in a painting, or emphasizing the emotions experienced by the character. An example is part of the caption accompanying a woman's portrait in a post from the Louvre. In it, the woman portrayed is introduced in the following way: "Emilie is a happy twenty-five-year-old woman who seems to come back from the fields with a bouquet of flowers in her hand, the cheeks

rosy from the walk with her son, Emile" (L34). Another example is a post from the Rijksmuseum where a girl dressed as Vermeer's *The Milkmaid* (1658) stands before another museum painting. In this way, the character from an art piece is literally brought to life (R38). As previously mentioned, this theme dimension has no connection with previous theory.

Figure 4.2

Post From the British Museum (B20_B), Showing an Employee at Work.

Figure 4.3

Screenshot of Video Post from Rijksmuseum, Showing an Employee in his House Library (R43)

A final way Instagram posts are used to humanize the museums is to express the organization's emotions, including their love for the public and how visitors are missed in the museum. All museums used this technique. This last aspect connects with the relationship cultivation strategy of assurances, as the organization expresses the importance of the public (Ki, 2014). Therefore, this theme, humanizing museum, mixes two relationship cultivation strategies and original elements.

4.1.2. Interactivity

Another of the museum's strategies to encourage public engagement on Instagram is prompting interactivity by suggesting activities to the public or offering the possibility to contribute to the museum's social media content. This is a direct way to generate engagement from the public. The theme interactivity contained the following subgroups: Ask for the public preference, Prompt active role of the public, Prompt public sharing and socializing, Public as creator, and Public input. Interactivity ranges from asking simple questions to the audience, inviting followers to share with other users or socialize within a virtual museum activity, to contributing with pictures to the museum's account. When connected with previous theory, this theme is linked to the relationship cultivation strategies of access and interactivity and the dialogic principle of the dialogic loop, as it implies offering a channel of communication to the public through which users can express their opinions and offer their input (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2009; Ki, 2014; Men et al., 2018).

However, interactivity differentiates from access as it does not offer the public any power in decision-making processes (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Regarding the dialogic loop, elements like asking a question to the public or tagging a user are present in the identified theme (Ki & Hon, 2009; Men et al., 2018; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020). For example, both the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre invited the public to share pictures of the museum so they could publish them on their profile and tag them (L23). This was done by using the hashtags #Rijksviews and #LouvreAtFirstSight.

Museums also proposed activities to users which could be done at home, such as an origami session created by the British Museum (B21).

An initiative worth noticing that prompted interactivity and created a clear connection between art and the public was #tussenkunstenquarantaine (Between art and quarantine). The Rijksmuseum followed this trend where the audience was invited to imitate a painting with materials and objects found at home. The museum then shared these pictures, motivating the public to continue participating (see Figure 4.4).

4.1.3. Entertainment

The previous example also connects with a strategy previously mentioned in the literature (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). That is the idea of marketing for entertainment by publishing attractive content to entertain the public. This implies a repositioning of the museums, which through games and humoristic elements, use entertainment to mediate between the original museum's goal of providing knowledge and the enjoyment of the audience (Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2020). Moreover, the wide assortment and novelty of the content presented connects to Tafesse and Wood's (2021) research, as offering varied content on digital communication increases engagement and better maintains the relationship with the public. It is necessary to note that the redesign of museum activities concentrates mainly on a digital environment due to the closures caused by the pandemic.

This theme contains the following subgroups: Games, Humor, Novelty, Public enjoyment, Spark interest, Storytelling, Providing distraction, and Recommendations to the public. Here stands out the use of humor, including jokes and trends or funny elements that started being popular during the lockdown caused by the pandemic. For example, the British Museum jokes about pets interrupting people during their day working from home and connects it to one of their art pieces: "Have any canine companions or feline friends been helping (or hindering) you as we #WorkFromHome? A Mesopotamian bricklayer might not have been too impressed when a dog walked through the wet clay of this brick over 4,000 years ago 🐾" (see Figure 4.5). In another example, the Rijksmuseum decided to follow the #reesewhiterspoonchallenge trend and illustrate the evolution of emotions during the first months of the pandemic using the expression of the characters in their paintings (see Figure 4.6).

An additional way of entertainment is sparking the public's interest with unknown or peculiar facts or new findings. For example, in one of its videos, the Louvre lets artist Jean-Michel Otoniel show hidden flowers in some of the museum's largest paintings (L50). Further examples are those of the British Museum sharing the picture of a 3.000-year-old piece of bread (see Figure 4.7) or the Rijksmuseum revealing the location of horse excrements in a painting that the artist initially hid (see Figure 4.8).

The goal of using entertaining elements in their images and captions could encourage users to share the content with friends and family, thus increasing public engagement.

Figure 4.4

Post Rijksmuseum (R2) 9th of April 2020

Figure 4.5

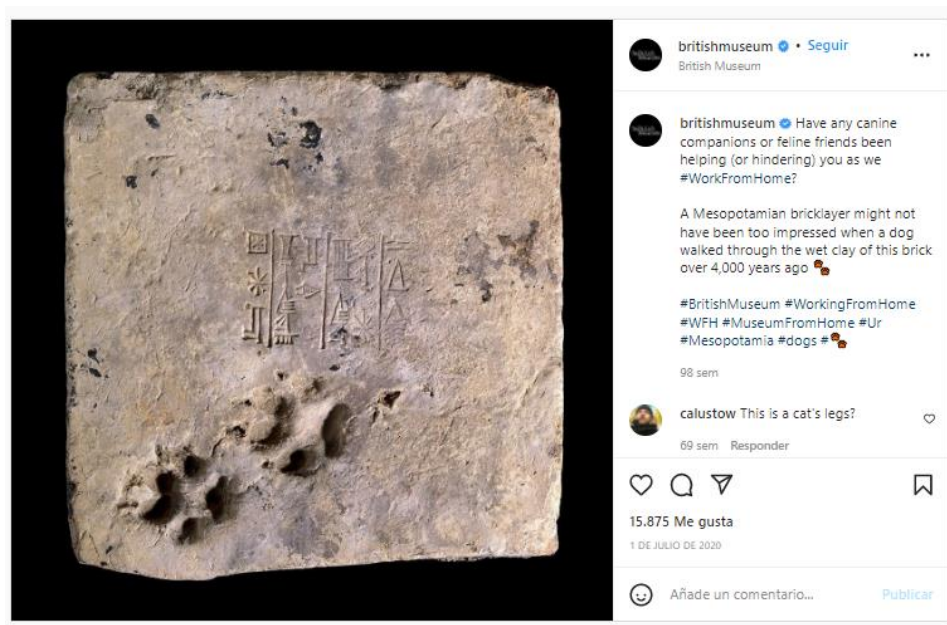*Post British Museum (B41) 1st of July 2020*

Figure 4.6

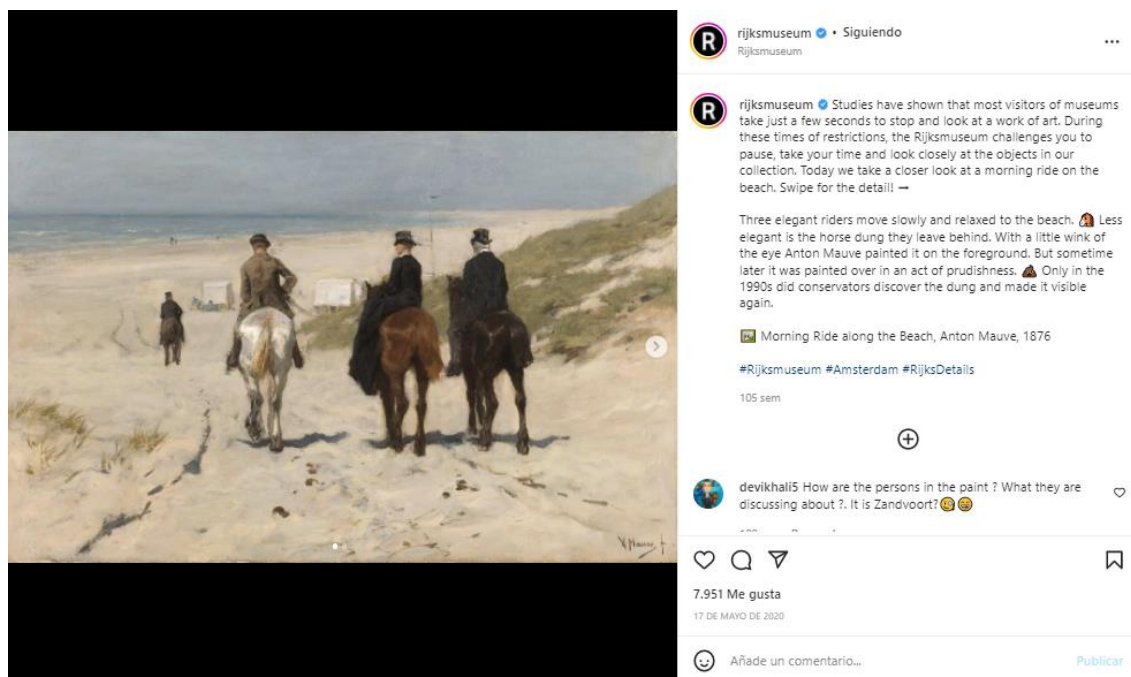*Post Rijksmuseum (R44) 8th of August 2020*

Figure 4.7

Post British Museum (B18) 30th of April 2020

Figure 4.8

Post Rijksmuseum (R20) 8th of August 2020

4.1.4. Positivity

The fourth theme identified was positivity, which contained the subgroups: Nature, Use of color, Light in image, Quiet and calm, Weather in the picture, Aesthetic, Daily good wishes, Expressing gratitude, Hope and expectations for the future, Triggering emotions, and Inspiring or motivating public. Positivity is one of the relationship cultivation strategies identified by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ki (2014), which goal is to create pleasant and enjoyable interactions with the public. However, it is necessary to note that some of the subgroups of this theme, like Nice Weather or Nature, do not involve an interaction with the public but simply a one-way communication of pleasant content. During the lockdown, many people were forced to stay home and inside doors (Redel-Macías et al., 2021). Therefore, one of the strategies used by museums to generate public engagement was to provide content that offered an escape from the limitations of the pandemic and gave optimism and hope for a return to normality.

This was done mainly in two ways. First, the art pieces and pictures published on Instagram portrayed, in many cases, outside spaces and landscapes surrounded by nature and with nice, sunny weather. Many posts also included colorful elements like flowers and animals. The images tended to be well illuminated and use bright colors. Additionally, various pictures of the museum gardens were shared in the case of the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre. It can be interpreted that offering this kind of content to the audience can contribute to providing some

relief by showing outdoor spaces that make up for not being able to go outdoors freely. Examples of this are the Italian landscapes by Voogd, published by the Rijksmuseum (see Figure 4.9), the picture of the flowering trees in the Louvre's gardens (see Figure 4.10), and the landscape with wild animals published by the British Museum (see Figure 4.11).

Second, positivity was communicated to the public by using an optimistic language, wishing the audience a good day, expressing gratitude for their support, inspiring the audience to be creative and motivated despite the circumstances, and offering hope for the future with announcements of the reopening and temporary exhibitions. Therefore, when consuming the posts created by the museums, the public would encounter a cheerful language that could make them experience joy and positivity.

4.1.5. Emphasis on Physicality

The fourth theme relates to how museums reminded the public of their physical locations. The subgroups contained in this theme were: Imitate physical experience, Portray normality, Physical location of museum, and Return to physical experience. The emphasis on the physical location of the museums was not only limited to museum buildings but also included the cities where these institutions were located. The goal of emphasizing the physical location represents an invitation for the public to return to the traditional museum experience once the pandemic is over and the restrictive measures are lifted. This would constitute a form of generating not only online engagement but also an offline call to action for the public.

Fernandez-Lores et al. (2022) point out in their study that the design of the museum's website can increase the intention of users to visit the museum. Despite the lack of research that addresses the relevance of social media to influence the public to go on a physical visit (Fernandez-Lores et al., 2022), the emphasis on physical location can indicate that reminding users of the physicality of the museum is a way to prompt them to visit once the institution reopens. In this way, the relationship with the museum is not limited to a digital environment.

This strategy was mainly carried out by centering on the museum building itself and sharing with the audience a specific museum room or gallery and its history instead of just focusing on art pieces. Examples of this are a post of the British Museum showing several galleries before the reopening (B48) or the Louvre introducing the initiative #LouvreHistory. In this last campaign, the Louvre centers on a different gallery of the museum every week (see Figure 4.12).

Another way in which this strategy was implemented was by trying to imitate the physical museum experience through virtual museum tours, like that of the British Museum

(B12), or by publishing photos of the museum taken before the COVID-19 pandemic, where visitors were present in the museum rooms (R48_B).

Figure 4.9

Post Rijksmuseum (R32) 14th of June 2020

Figure 4.10

Post Louvre Museum (L6) 21st of March 2020

Figure 4.11

Post British Museum (B13_B) 17th of April 2020

4.1.6. Prioritize Safety and Health

The sixth theme identified contains the subgroups: Closed Museum, Connecting art and COVID-19, Effects of COVID-19, Empty spaces, Isolated figures, Wide shot, Well-being public/staff, Outside activity, Museum's open-air spaces. Even though words like COVID-19 or pandemic were not often used in museums' communication on Instagram, museums referred to the pandemic indirectly, recognizing its existence and consequences. One of the main strategies used by museums during this period was to portray an image of safety on their Instagram accounts. This reflected an image of a responsible institution that prioritized the public's well-being and safety above all, thus generating more support from the audience. The focus on the public's well-being coincides with the previous study of Tan and Tan (2021) about museums in Singapore. Additionally, acknowledging the effects of the pandemic on the museums themselves could also foment empathy from the public. This was done often by publishing posts that reminded the audience that the museum was closed. Moreover, according to Lee (2022), employees' relationship with the organization and dialogic communication strategies helps workers engage in safety behaviors and recognize the threat of COVID-19. These findings could also be applied in the present research, where the data indicates that museums use Instagram content to create more awareness around the existence of the pandemic and promote the well-being and safety of the public and staff.

The primary way museums portrayed an image of safety was by sharing wide-shot images of empty spaces or spaces with isolated visitors. Even after the museums reopened, the pictures reflected mainly empty or not crowdy spaces, as seen in a post from the Rijksmuseum (see Figure 4.13). The same was the case with the selection of art pieces to be shared on Instagram during this period. Most paintings shared on the museums' accounts were empty landscapes or individual portraits. Crowdy paintings were avoided. Of course, this also depends on the museums' collections, as in most cases, museums limit themselves to showing their collections (L42, B26).

Finally, once museums resumed their activities, outside events were often prioritized, such as sailing boats at the Tuileries Gardens (L46) or the painting sessions at the gardens of the Rijksmuseum (R39).

Figure 4.12

Post Louvre Museum (L8) 25th of March 2020
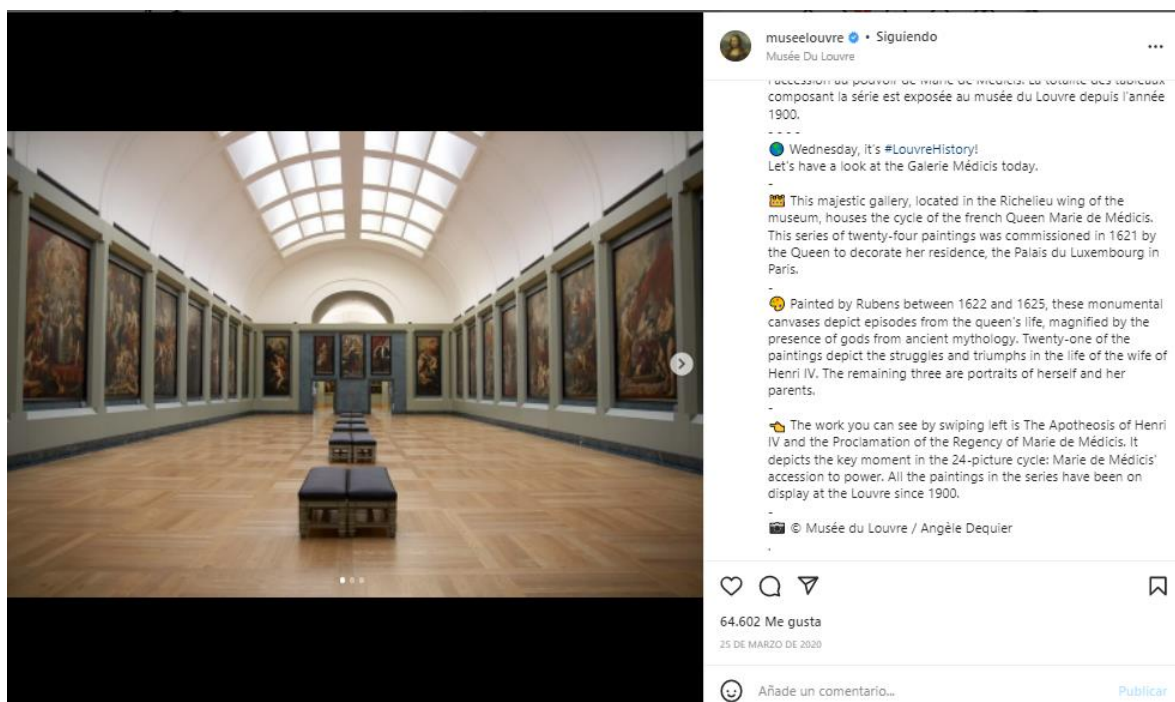
Figure 4.13

Post Rijksmuseum (R46) 24ᵗʰ of August 2020

4.1.7. Expanding Reach/Networking

The final theme that will be expanded in this study for SQ1 is expanding reach/networking, which contains the subgroups Celebrate/commemorate dates, Celebration museum, Following trends, Use of general hashtags, Identification, and Self-Promotion, Invitation to follow, Partnerships, Collaborations and Sponsorships, Relationships with other museums, Social media campaigns, and Temporary exhibitions. This identified theme connects with the relationship cultivation strategy of networking (Hon & Grunig, 1999). By widening their network and reaching a new audience, museums increase their online presence and the possibilities for public engagement. However, the theme is not limited to building alliances with groups or partners that interest the strategic public. It also involves exploiting the museums' assets (masterpieces, for example), following existing trends about topics unrelated to the museum, and trying to create viral content.

This strategy was implemented in several ways. By following Instagram lockdown trends, like #baking or #reesewitherspoonchallenge, and using general hashtags that address more general topics, like #spring, #inspiration, or #crafts, museums could reach a broader audience that follows these trends and explores on Instagram. The same happens when museums commemorate dates like #Pride (B38) or events like #FashionWeek (L37).

Another way to utilize this strategy was to introduce a wide range of social media campaigns related to COVID-19 and the lockdown, like #tussenkunstenquarantaine, #MuseumFromHome, #CollectionsUnited #CuratorFromHome, #LouvreChezNous, #RijksmuseumFromHome, among others. Collaborations with traditional media, sponsors, and partnerships with public figures or other museums were also a way these institutions used to reach a new public during this period.

Finally, museums opted to promote themselves using their collections, especially their masterpieces, and their location as a selling point.

4.2. Cultural-Dependent Communicational Patterns

Each of the museums selected has distinguished strategies to cultivate a relationship with the public. The second sub-question aimed to identify cultural differences between the selected museums that could influence their communication strategies. Five themes summed up these differences: Promoting national culture, Universal culture, Content innovation, Humans in the organization, and Prioritizing collection (see Table 4.1).

4.2.1. Promote National Culture and Universal Culture

Before proceeding with the comparison, it is necessary to note on one hand that the theme promote national culture is constituted by the subgroups: National culture, About history, Celebrate/commemorate date, and Role in region or community. On the other hand, the theme of universal culture contains subgroups of Ancient art, Mythology, Multiculturality, and Museum reach.

One of the main elements that differentiate the selected museums is the content of their posts concerning the art they share and promote. On one side, the Rijksmuseum promotes national culture by including only Dutch art pieces in its content and addressing popular elements of Dutch culture, Dutch history, and Dutch holidays. Examples of this are posts that show paintings of great Dutch masters like Rembrandt or Vermeer (see Figures 4.14 and 4.15) or activities that spin around a Dutch holiday, like the online pub quiz designed to celebrate King's Day (R15). These findings are traced back to pre-pandemic communication. A previous study by van der Hoeven and Brandellero (2015) identified that Dutch museums and archives centered on transmitting cultural pride and a sense of belonging to build national cultural identities. The same is the case in the analyzed Instagram posts of the Rijksmuseum. However, it is essential to note that all of the Rijksmuseum's communication (captions and

audio) is in English, only using native Dutch in the videos' subtitles. This indicates that the museum still aims to have a worldwide reach.

Table 4.1

Summary Table of the Culture-Dependent Communicational Patterns.

Theme	Rijksmuseum	British Museum	Louvre Museum
Promote National Culture	Main focus on Dutch culture and art. Use of Dutch art pieces.	Isolated reference to British culture. Not main focus.	Promote the museum's history and location, and support of local region.
Universal Culture	No space dedicated to foreign art pieces.	Main focus on ancient and foreign cultures. Foreign art as primary focus.	Preponderant attention to foreign art pieces.
Content and Digital innovation	Content innovation, different initiatives, social media campaigns and content. Create and follow Instagram trends.	Focus on technological tools and different formats. Focus on link to different platforms.	No innovation regarding content or use of digital technologies.
Humans in organization	Especial emphasis on employees, their work, and their personal experiences from home during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Attention to staff and their work behind the scenes. Diversity in staff, especial emphasis on women employees.	No focus on staff. Employees are not present on Instagram communication.
Prioritizing collection	Emphasis on collection, but not only focus.	Emphasis on collection, but not only focus.	Collection and museum facilities as main communicational focus.

On the other hand, the British Museum's content mainly refers to foreign art, culture, and history. Its mentions of British cultural elements or history are scarce. Then, this museum shows in its posts pieces from Egypt (B3), Mesopotamia, and Japan and explains elements of ancient foreign cultures by offering virtual trips to ancient civilizations (B45). This focus on foreign cultures can be explained by British colonial history and the museum's original purpose (Berger, 2015). Rose-Greenland (2013) argues that owning and promoting objects from other cultures and nations is a way to transcend the "national particularity and rise to the level of supra-nation-state" (p.668). To prove its legitimacy to the colonies and the British population and to display its imperial ambitions, the British culture adopted foreign objects as its own (Berger, 2015; Rose-Greenland, 2013). This tendency has persisted up to today and is reflected in the British Museum's digital communication, presenting itself as a universal museum.

The same is the case with the Louvre Museum, which became an imperial museum in the times of Napoleon (Berger,2015). However, the Louvre Museum currently stands between the Rijksmuseum and the British Museum, with a mix of a mostly foreign art and an emphasis on French history and the history of its own museum. The Louvre also tries to promote the local region by participating in the initiative #MonÉtéMaRégion (My summer, my region) to help restore the country after the de-escalation of the COVID-19 restrictions. This last example could indicate a turn to a more local or national approach, considering that, after reopening, much of its international public could not visit the museum physically due to COVID-19 restrictions.

It is important to note that emphasizing national or foreign culture through Instagram content also depends on each museum's collection. The Rijksmuseum, for example, is a national museum that centers on Dutch history (Rijksmuseum, n.d.), and the British Museum is a national museum that centers on the cultures of the world (British Museum, n.d.), while the Louvre's purpose is to contribute to enriching French artistic collections (Amis du Louvre, n.d.). However, by identifying the main focus of these relevant museums, some of the most important within their own country, it is possible to determine what is culturally more relevant in each country.

Figures 4.14

Example of Posted Painting The Syndics *(1662) by Rembrandt, (R3)*

Figure 4.15

Example of Posted Painting Woman Reading a Letter *(1663) by Vermeer, (R4)*

4.2.2. Content and Digital Innovation

The second difference found regarding cultural differences is the focus on content and digital innovation, a theme that contains the subgroups: Virtual tools, Digital technologies, Following trends, Social media campaigns, Humor, Games, and Novelty. On the one hand, the British Museum stands out for its focus on using virtual tools and digital technology to reach its

audience during the pandemic. Virtual tours, immersive videos, the use of different digital formats to visit the museum, digital learning resources, audio guides, and digital collection are some elements that the British Museum had and promoted on social media. A clear example of one of these tools is an immersive video of a Japanese painting (B6) or the promotion of a live stream at the museum (B25). As a public organization, the British Museum has been affected by government policies that have encouraged cultural institutions to find solutions to be more economically independent (Jaffry & Apostolakis, 2010). One way the British Museum addressed this issue was by increasing its online engagement (Jaffry & Apostolakis, 2010). This would explain the museum's emphasis on developing technology-related innovations or initiatives.

On the contrary, the Rijksmuseum's innovations centered more on content by offering the public new and different material, such as novel initiatives, humoristic elements, trends, and activities for the public. This museum also opted for presenting art to the public in various ways. According to the reputational study conducted by van Riel and Heijndijk (2017), Dutch museums were distinguished by their focus on innovation. This coincides with the findings, even though the museum's focus was more on content innovation rather than technological innovation. For example, in two posts, the museum placed facemasks on art pieces (R37 and R45); in another post, the museum compared the painting with an original picture of the portrayed person (see Figures 4.16 and 4.17).

The Louvre did not opt for innovation in most of its content but instead had three or four styles of posts used throughout the first six months of the pandemic. The Louvre decided to rely on its collection and museum building to encourage public engagement. Emphasizing the collection is a logical approach, considering that the Louvre is highly regarded worldwide due to the quality of its collection (van Riel & Heijndijk, 2017). This refers to the theme of prioritizing collection, which will not be extended in the present research.

Figure 4.16

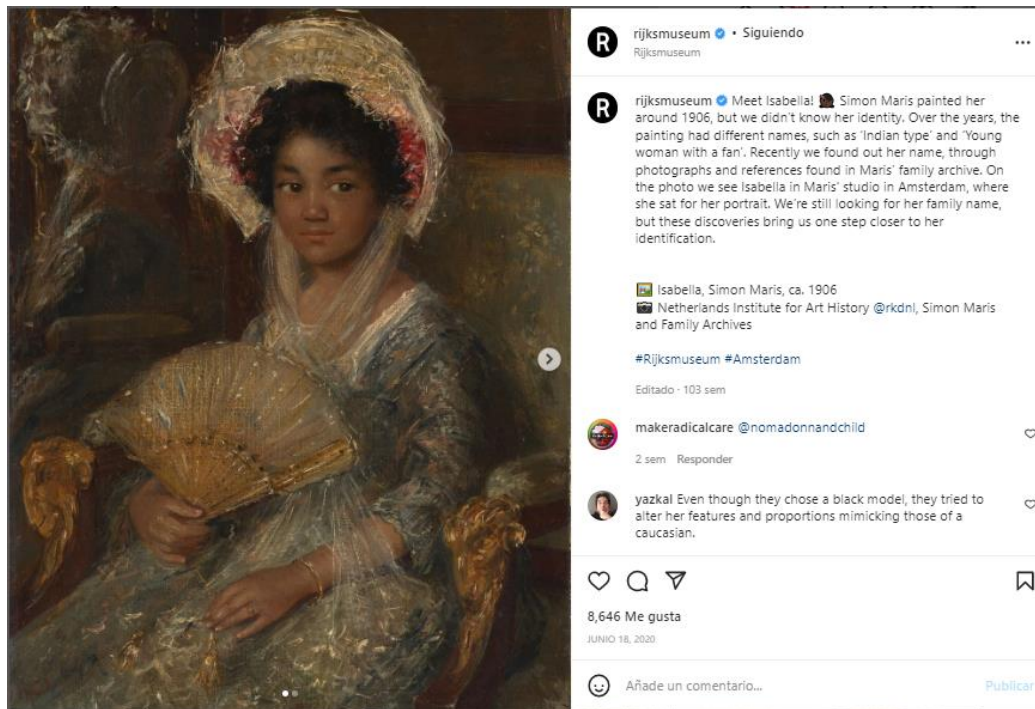*Painting* Isabella *(1906) by Maris, from Post by Rijksmuseum (R33) 18ᵗʰ of June 2020*

Figure 4.17

Reference Picture From Post by Rijksmuseum (R33) 18ᵗʰ of June 2020

4..2.3. Humans in Organization

Similar to the theme of humanizing museum, the Rijksmuseum especially, and the British Museum in second place, opted to create a connection between the museum's staff and the public. The subgroups present in this theme are: Life during the lockdown, Getting to know the staff, Getting to know the organization, Team effort, and Well-being of staff/public. By presenting employees working from home and sharing employees' opinions and experiences, these two museums decided to give relevance to the human factor of their organizations. In this way, employees became protagonists in museums' communication. This also created awareness about the work behind the scenes done in these cultural institutions, as the emphasis is also placed on research and restoration. This theme connects to van Riel and Heijndijk's (2017) research, where the Rijksmuseum is recognized for its quality as a workplace. In the case of the British Museum, British cultural policy has pushed in recent years for a more inclusive and enriching working environment (Dragouni & McCarthy, 2021). This policy, in turn, is reflected in the museum's communication which, for example, portrays mostly women workers (see Figure 5).

On the contrary, the Louvre Museum only included the image of one employee in one of its Instagram posts (L35), and, in this case, the post's content did not focus on the worker. Thus, the staff members were not presented or individualized.

4.3. Public Engagement

By analyzing the comments published by users in the selected posts, it was possible to identify the main ways in which the public engaged with the museum content during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Six themes were identified during the analysis: Information consumption and input, Sense of presence, Interest immersion, Social interaction, Sharing exceptional situations, and Question organization (see Figure 4.18). The first four themes coincide with the engagement activities identified by Smith and Gallicano (2015). Sharing exceptional situations connects directly with the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, while question organization escapes the purpose of this research. The main aspects of these themes will be discussed next to provide an answer for sub-question 3.

The comments chosen as examples in this section were originally written in English to offer more transparent information.

Figure 4.18

Summary Graphic of Identified Themes for Sub-Question 3
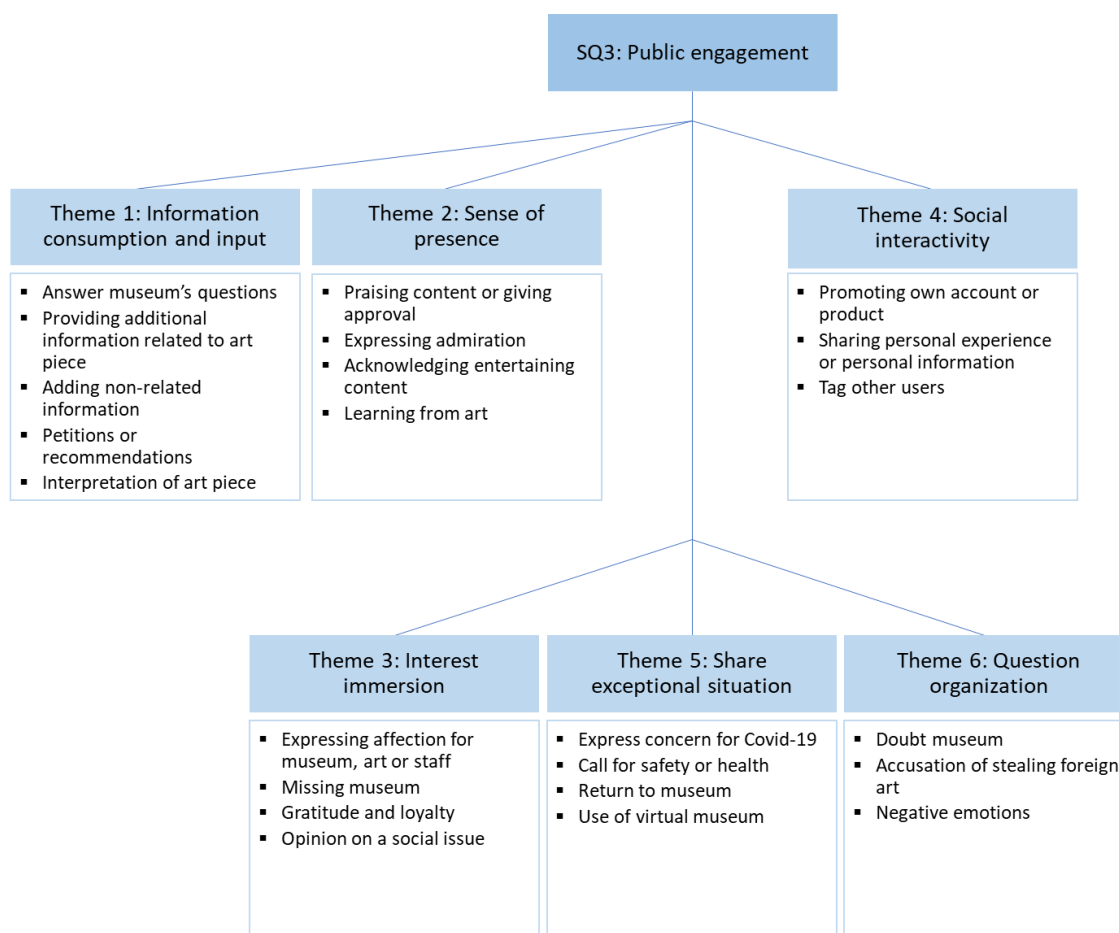
4.3.1. Information Consumption and Input

The first identified theme refers to the public consuming information and collaborating to generate content. By expressing its opinion, interpreting the content, or asking questions, the public acknowledges having consumed the information provided by the museum and has the possibility of becoming an expert in its field of interest (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Consuming information implies looking at the images published and reading the accompanying caption. After this, the public gives its input by providing additional data to that shared by the museum and making requests or recommendations to the cultural institutions. Moreover, the public also chooses to answer questions the museum asks, an indicator of consumption and input. The subgroups contained in this theme are Opinion/interpretation, Ask questions, Additional information, Requests, Comparisons, Recommendations, and Interaction with the museum.

Examples of this theme are comments like "We need to make art accessible to all the public online, all the new exhibitions, the permanent collection, that can be a good chance for

the cultural life!! Thanks for sharing these videos!" by @lionandtiger_conservation (R1). Another example is the interpretation of art pieces such as "In other words, a sort of visual reference letter to find a husband. A great painting by Veronese conceived for a humiliating purpose.", a comment by @dscolari.art about a painting at the Louvre (L42).

Finally, an example of providing additional information can be seen in a comment by @darnelljane about the painting *The Threatened Swan* (1650) by Asselijn. The user commented, "There has been a lot of talk about whether the Rijksmuseum added the text, but it was added probably in the 1750s during a pamphlet war called 'Witten-Oorlog.' I have an old dissertation on the National Konst Galerie, which was the precursor to the Rijksmuseum before the French invasion of 1794..." (R7).

4.3.2. Sense of Presence

As defined in the codebook, this theme refers to users assessing the experience provided by the museum by evaluating aspects like the entertainment value or the aesthetical experience (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). The subgroups identified within this theme are Praise, Entertained, Impressed, Learning, Approval, Aesthetical experience, Value museum, and Admiration. As it can be noted considering the subgroups, the public engaged with the museum by praising the content or expressing their approval or admiration for the museum's initiatives. For example, @moj.lipi.vrtlic commented on one of the #tussenkunstenenquarantaine posts of the Rijksmuseum "Brilliant ideas👍👍👍👍👍👌👌" (R17). The public also expressed if the content entertained them, impressed them, or if they had learned something from it, as @explaining.art, which commented on a Louvre post (L32): "I didn't know about those facts! Really nice 👏 💙".

4.3.3. Interest Immersion

This theme relates to the public expressing its emotions to fulfill an emotional need. Smith and Gallicano (2015) identified that the public immerses itself in a topic or content, finding inspiration, emotional attachment, or social relevance. The subgroups in this theme are Emotional attachment, Gratitude, Social commenting, Celebration, Humanizing, Reference to employees, Wishes, Expressiveness, Loyalty, Happiness, and Negative emotions. This theme implies expressing affection for the published content, the art, or the museum and its staff. For example, @sheen.gabriella commented, "Love the British Museum… Love London...one day the international borders will come down in Australia, and I can travel again" (B37). This affection can also be expressed by users stating that they miss the museum, such as

@netanelarha, who says, "Miss that place so much 😢😢" (R11). It also involves expressing gratitude and loyalty for the museum as well as a stand in a social issue, as an emotional investment often accompanies statements on social matters. However, this last topic is irrelevant for the present research as comments about social issues were not frequent in the data analyzed.

Not all the comments on the theme of interest immersion are positive, as the audience expressed negative emotions occasionally.

4.3.4. Social Interactivity

The public also uses comments on the museum's Instagram posts to interact with other social media users, share their experiences, search for approval or find individuals with similar interests (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). This connects with one of the main goals of social media platforms, which is to facilitate interpersonal connections (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). The subgroups identified in this theme were Promotion, Personal experience, Interaction with users, Greetings, Empathy, and Showing the user's origin. The interactions with other social media users often imply promoting an account or product. It also involves sharing a personal experience related to the museum, for example, "This is the first piece of art that our guide, Gerard, took us to see last year. He explained the history and significance to us...He is from Spain, and it's one of his favorites. It's just beautiful… ❤️ I will never forget it." (L26), by @cthartsfield. This theme also includes comments where users tag other users to share the museum's content, such as "@daphne_jc and @leslieannfunck you MUST submit yours!!! They price worthy!" by @begiugiu, about one of the activities proposed by the Rijksmuseum (R2). On some occasions, users have conversations through the comments on a post.

Finally, some users share personal information about themselves, like their country of origin.

4.3.5. Share an Exceptional Situation

This theme relates directly to the exceptional situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and is not related to the engagement activities proposed by Smith and Gallicano (2015). It reflects how the public addresses the topic of the pandemic in their comments and the closure of museums. The subgroups present in this theme are COVID-19, Experience physical museum, and Virtual experience. Despite not being a prominent theme, some users expressed their worries about the virus's effects and called to follow the necessary measures to return to normality. For example, @tiamorose7 expressed, "Stay home, the museum will

still be there a month later, protect yourself so you will be there a month later #coronavirus" (R47).

Some users also expressed their excitement about physically returning to the museum and enjoyment of the virtual tools offered by museums to explore collections digitally. For example, @h.b.la shared, "Took the tour all by myself last night. Dream come true!" (B12).

The sixth theme identified in regards to public engagement was Question organization. Since this theme mainly relates to users accusing the museum of stealing art pieces from their countries of origin, it will not be explained further as this is unrelated to the situation caused by the pandemic and, therefore, not relevant to the present study.

4.4. Digital Initiatives and Transformation of the Museum Experience

The final sub-question answered in this study relates to how digital initiatives shared through Instagram have transformed the museum experience during the pandemic. The themes used to answer SQ4 are Accessibility, Education tool, Expanded information, Offer a closer look, Improved museum experience, and Creating a new relationship with the public (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19

Summary Graphic of Identified Themes for Sub-Question 4
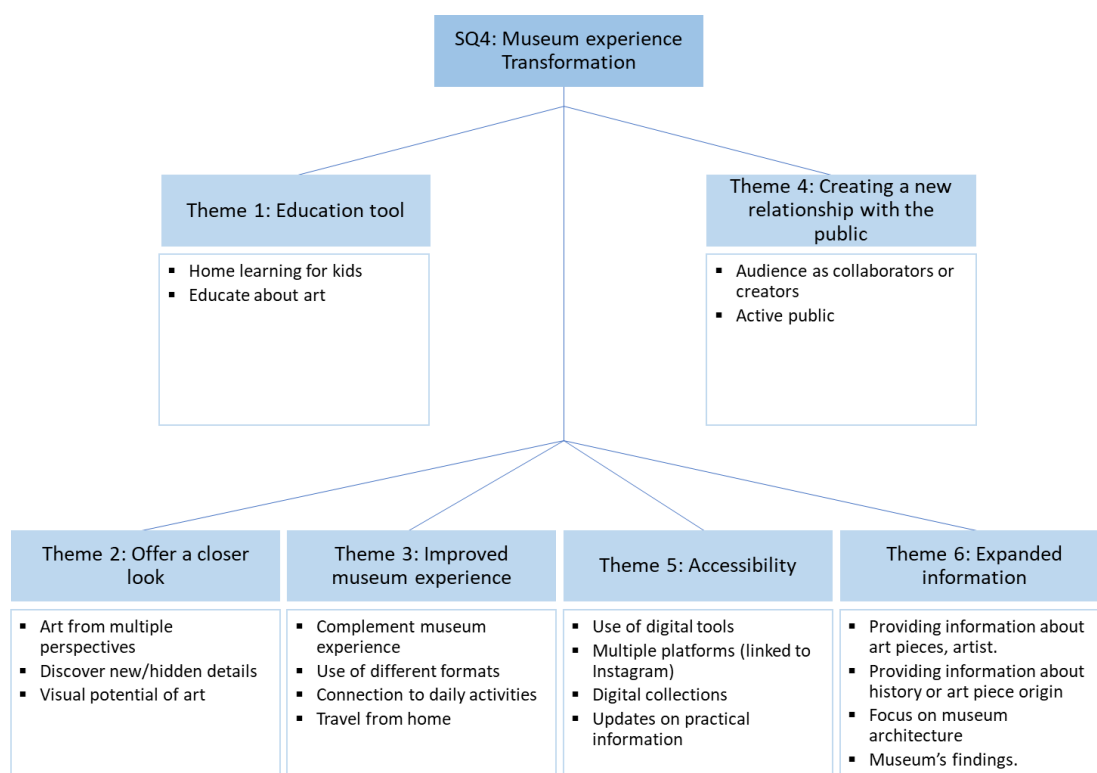
4.4.1. Accessibility

The use of digital initiatives and tools made museums more accessible to the public worldwide. Physical proximity is no longer necessary to enjoy these cultural institutions or explore their collections. Additionally, social media is a link between all the museum's digital platforms and the public and a vehicle for updates and practical information. The subgroups in this theme are Contact information, Link to other platforms, More access to museums, Practical information, Experience museum from home, Museum reach, and Inform reopening. As the name of the theme indicates, accessibility is connected to the relationship cultivation strategy of access, which includes providing contact information and various communication channels through which the public can reach the museum (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014). Moreover, this theme can also be linked to the dialogic principle of the usefulness of information, as it implies providing information that fulfills the public's needs, such as practical details and updates on the reopening (Ki & Hon, 2009; Men et al., 2018; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020).

Due to the closures caused by the pandemic, museums were forced to emphasize their digital collections and invite the public to visit the museum from home. Therefore, they provided on their Instagram accounts not only content about their collections but links to the official website (R2), other social media platforms, and blogs (B28). The goal was to make the museum accessible despite the COVID-19 restrictions.

Instagram was also used to inform the public about possible updates related to the closure, reopening, temporary exhibitions, and other practical information (L2). In this way, any news or updates were offered to the public without them having to search actively for the information on the museum website.

4.4.2. Education Tool

Digital technology also helped museums reinforce their role in education beyond the barriers of the physical museum. Instagram became a tool to connect the public with digital learning resources and reach younger audiences. The subgroups in this theme are Learning resources, Educating the public, and Connecting with the youth. This theme connects with the strategy of community service identified by Kotler and Kotler (2000), fulfills museums' goal of having an educational role within the community and creating a link with younger generations (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Morse & Munro, 2015; Tan & Tan, 2021).

The British Museum stands out by offering tools for home learning for kids and youngsters, as is seen in a post where they offer learning resources related to the school curriculum of kids aged 3 to 16 (B9).

Digital initiatives on social media also allowed to educate the audience about the art in museums, including information about the artist, culture, art pieces, and history. In this way, museums offer more information through social media than visitors would learn when visiting the museum physically. This, also related to the educative role of museums, results in another of the identified themes, expanded information, which will not be addressed further in the present study.

4.4.3. Offer a Closer Look

The following two themes can be connected with the strategy of improving the museum experience (Kotler & Kotler, 2000) and the initiative of replacing the museum experience using online platforms (Burke et al., 2020). This strategy and this initiative both offer an extensive and improved digital experience to make up for the museums' closure.

However, the identified themes will be treated separately, as offer a closer look refers to how the art objects are presented to the public, and an improved museum experience encompasses more the improvements that emerged beyond the focus on simply portraying art pieces.

Regarding the theme of offer a closer look, digital initiatives on Instagram also allowed the public to enjoy art from new and multiple perspectives or angles, something not always possible during a physical visit. Consequently, social media content gave the audience a new way to look at art, discovering hidden details or aspects that go unnoticed in a traditional museum experience. The subgroups in this theme are Closer look (which gave the name to the central theme), Focus, Every angle, and Visual portrayal. As a visual social media platform, Instagram offers the possibility to exploit the potential of the visual aspect of art. In this sense, the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre introduced initiatives on Instagram to look at art closer and more carefully, #RijksDetails and #LouvreDetails. Through this initiative, they invited the public to pay attention to hidden details like the political message in The Threatened Swan painting (R7), or also to see an art piece from different angles, even perspectives not accessible during a physical visit, like the bottom of the Pyxis of al-Mughira ivory box at the Louvre (L26_G).

4.4.4. Improved Museum Experience

In general, as seen with the offer a closer look theme, the goal of museums using digital initiatives is to offer something to the public that is not necessarily found by visiting the museum physically. In other words, the goal is not always to replicate but to improve the museum experience (Burke et al., 2020; Kotler & Kotler, 2000). The subgroups in this theme are Various formats, Digital technology, Social media campaigns, Travel from home, and Virtual tools.

The selected museums, especially the British Museum, aim to create content that complements physical visits by using different formats to present their collection (photos, videos, and live streams). Museums also try to connect the collections to daily activities that users could do at home during the lockdown. For example, the British Museum promotes its blog on Instagram, where users can find information like cooking recipes from Ancient Greece and Rome (B36). Finally, museums aim to create digital initiatives that allow their audience to travel, not only to the museum but to different places worldwide. For example, the British Museum offered travel guides to ancient civilizations, allowing the public to be tourists from home (B45).

4.4.5. Creating a New Relationship with the Public

As previously mentioned, museums aimed to foment interaction with the public on Instagram during the lockdown by asking for the public's input and sharing content created by the audience. This was a way to use digital initiatives, like #tussenkunstenquarantaine, to create a new relationship with the public, making users creators and collaborators of the museums' content. The subgroups in this theme are: Ask for the public preference, Museum tag, Prompt public active role, Prompt loyalty, Public acknowledgment, and Public as creator. As its name indicates, this theme corresponds to the initiative identified by Burke et al. (2020), where the public becomes a creative contributor to the museum.

By acknowledging the value of the public and inviting the public to collaborate, the museums transform the museum experience by making the audience an active actor instead of a passive visitor. An example of this is the already mentioned weekly initiatives of the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre to share a picture taken by one user.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Art museums relied on several communicational strategies and initiatives to cultivate relationships with the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, all the themes identified can be grouped into four trends, reflecting the main tendencies and purposes of museums' strategic communication.

First, museums opted to present an accessible and open image to existing public and new audiences. This implicated providing helpful information to users and different channels to access the museum's art pieces while also portraying the organization as an institution beyond its art collection. In this case, the findings partly coincide with the relationship cultivation strategies of access and networking, previously identified by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ki (2014). These communicational strategies were designed to cultivate a relationship with the already existing public (Ki, 2014). Still, findings indicate that museums also used them, especially networking, to connect with new audiences and broaden the reach of their cultural offer, thus confirming O'Neil's (2014) definition of relationship cultivation strategies and the development identified by Agostino et al. (2020) and Vrana et al. (2021). It was noted in the data analyzed that the relationship cultivation strategies were not necessarily used to their full potential. For example, the public was not offered the possibility to participate in decision-making processes (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2009).

This first trend also confirms the use of three of the four dialogical principles observed in previous studies. These were conservation of visitors, generation of returns visits, and usefulness of information (Ki & Hon, 2009; Men et al., 2018; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020). These principles were reflected in the use of several resources, links to other platforms, updates, and engaging content made available by museums on Instagram. These dialogic principles also indicate a tendency of museums to rely on one-way communication, which confirms the findings of Men et al. (2018) and Wang and Yang (2020).

In the second place, findings suggest that museums try to build a close connection with the public. This connection was, in many cases, emotional and implied the audience having a more active role in its relationship with the museum, for example, by participating in the organization's creation of content and being able to express their opinion or knowledge. In this case, the themes identified can be linked to several strategies from the relationship cultivation strategies (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014) and the features and principles of dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Wang & Yang, 2020). For example, access is present here again as a strategy that reflects the interactivity of Instagram

(Ki, 2014; Men & Tsai, 2012). Another aspect of this trend of connecting with the public is the focus on the emotional aspect of the relationship, something formerly defined in the relationship cultivation strategy of openness and disclosure (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2014). The strategy assurances (Ki & Hon, 2009; Ki, 2014) and the dialogic features of mutuality and empathy (Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020) were also identified, as museums reassured the public of their importance through their Instagram content.

Moreover, this second trend is associated with the museum initiative: creating a new relationship with the public, previously identified by Burke et al. (2020). Museums forged a new connection with the public by inviting visitors to be creative contributors.

Additionally, results reveal that museums predominantly rely on asynchronous interactions, where the public is not required to respond in real-time (Agostino et al., 2020). Real-time interactions were employed in the studied data but were not as prevalent.

However, previous theory does not fully encompass findings, as museums opted to present a humanized image that created an emotional attachment with the public. This humanization not only included emphasizing the role and personal lives of museums' employees but also taking advantage of the human aspect of art pieces. The humanization of art comprised accentuating the motivations behind a painting, the stories portrayed, and treating art pieces as if they were alive.

Third, another trend identified was the transformation of the museum experience to adapt it to the new circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This transformation contributed to cultivating the relationship with the public by emphasizing digital alternatives and creating value by offering an experience that surpassed the traditional physical museum visit. These findings confirm that museums use the strategy of improving the museum-going experience, previously identified by Kotler and Kotler (2000). Furthermore, findings indicate that the selected museums opted to combine the two initiatives observed by Burke et al. (2020), replicating museum experience and replacing physical experience with digital-only initiatives. Therefore, museums emphasize, on the one hand, an online-only experience by adding value to the digital dimension of the museum and making use of different formats like video. Nonetheless, at the same time, museums emphasize the physical locations of museums. In this sense, findings deviate from previous theory as museums did not try to replicate the physical museum experience but focused on their physical buildings and locations to prepare for an eventual reopening and remind the public of the benefits and attractiveness of their physical locations.

Finally, the fourth trend identified explicitly related to the exceptional situation of the pandemic. The museums created content to contribute to the public's well-being and

entertainment by designing uplifting content and reminding the audience of the necessity of staying healthy and safe. Even though museums continued to focus on their educational role by offering learning resources and in-depth information about art pieces, findings indicate that these institutions aimed to fulfill the public needs caused explicitly by the lockdowns during the pandemic. These findings can be linked to previous literature, including the positivity relationship cultivation strategy (Ki & Hon, 2009; Ki, 2014) and the market repositioning towards entertainment identified by Kotler and Kotler (2000). However, the emphasis on the public's well-being, beyond their relationship with the museum, represents a new finding, which complements previous insights on the museum's role in well-being during the pandemic (Tan & Tan, 2021). While Tan and Tan (2021) focused mainly on the accessibility of digital tools, this research noted tailoring of the content to foment the public's well-being. This also includes using the collections, which offer a wide variety of topics and styles, to provide the public with adequate content that can contribute to wellness.

It is necessary to note that these identified trends were, in some cases, connected to specific cultural and contextual communicational patterns. The study found a predominance of the divergence approach proposed by Hung (2004), as, despite the similarities in the Instagram communication, each museum emphasized different strategies. However, considering that the selected museums come from western countries, findings indicated the use of access and positivity as predominant strategies in all museums, confirming previous findings by Huang et al. (2022) regarding western cultures. Some of the elements that influenced the communicational differences between the studied countries were colonial history and national pride (Berger, 2015; van der Hoeven & Brandellero, 2015; Rose-Greenland, 2013), or governmental policies, as in the case of the UK (Dragouni & McCarthy, 2021; Jaffry & Apostolakis, 2010). However, in an aspect not so closely related to cultural patterns but identified in this study, museums tend to rely on the aspects they consider their strengths and reflect this in their Instagram communication. This connects to the reputational study conducted by van Riel and Heijndijk (2017). It is necessary to note that these cultural aspects were not influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic in the majority but have been an intrinsic part of the museums' communication from pre-pandemic times.

Concerning how the public engaged with the museum's content, it was observed that four out of the six themes identified coincided with the public engagement activities proposed by Smith and Gallicano (2015). Identifying themes that address information consumption and sense of presence can reflect the cognitive engagement of the public. This, in turn, confirms that museums are fulfilling their educational role, as the public can connect with a topic and deepen their knowledge (Budge & Burnes, 2018). Additionally, the identification of the theme

of interest immersion indicates an emotional involvement of the audience (Smith & Gallicano, 2015), something that can increase the loyalty towards the organization, according to previous research by Oliveira and Fernandes (2020). Moreover, social interactions carried out through Instagram reflect the participatory culture identified by Taylor and Kent (2014), which museums have used in this case to establish and grow new relationships with users (Taylor & Kent, 2014). The present study also identified a form of public engagement not present in previous literature and related to sharing the experience of an exceptional situation like the COVID-19 pandemic with other users. Museums' content allowed users to employ the comment sections to share concerns, experiences, and wishes regarding the worldwide health crisis. It represented an alternative to physical and social interactions, limited by the lockdowns during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.1.2. New Theoretical Insights

One of the main findings of this research is the specific way museums address an exceptional situation like the COVID-19 pandemic in their Instagram communication. Museums have the advantage of containing art pieces that treat diverse topics and have different styles. This, in conjunction with the human aspect of art, was used by museums to design content tailored to address the pandemic and its consequences. Thus, the audience's needs were fulfilled, and the relationship with the public was maintained. The stories behind the art, the characters portrayed in a painting, or the artists' motivations allowed museums to reflect a humanized image and create an emotional connection with the audience. This humanization was applicable in many of the communicational strategies used by museums, including providing entertainment and positivity, projecting an image of safety, or educating the public. This finding contributes to the literature on cultural institutions' public relations and can be considered an extension of the relationship cultivations strategies.

Considering the exceptional situation caused by the pandemic, findings reflected a focus of museums on the well-being and safety of the public, beyond the normal relationship between the audience and the museum. This indicates that museums have stepped outside their traditional role in education and preservation of culture (Kotler & Kotler, 2000) and adopted the social role of ensuring their audience's health, safety, and well-being. This new role is not directly connected to art and is something museums tried to achieve through their communication on social media. While previous studies (Tan & Tan, 2021) have identified the interest of museums in the public's well-being during the pandemic, this research focused on the specific content design to promote the well-being of the audience, beyond digital accessibility. This insight can also represent an extension of the relationship cultivation

strategy in the specific context of exceptional situations. The public engagement also reflected the importance that the audience gave to this treatment of a situation like the COVID-19 pandemic, thus contributing to the public engagement literature.

Another contribution to the literature is the identification of the emphasis placed on physicality. It is logical for organizations like cultural institutions to use social media to encourage physical visits from the public. However, in this period, the emphasis on physicality acquires a different dimension when museums cannot welcome visitors in their buildings. The accentuation of the museum facilities and the museum's city constitutes then a reminder for the public that the museum will not be reduced to its online presence. It also encourages the public to return to the museums once they reopen. This finding incorporates a nuance to the initiatives identified by Burke et al. (2020).

5.2. Managerial Implications

The present research observed that museums relied mainly on one-way communication. Despite their initiatives to prompt an active role from the audience, the audience participation was limited to sharing pictures, answering questions, or sharing an opinion. Therefore, the museums generally did not adopt suggestions or allow the audience to participate in decision-making processes. Consequently, to better fulfill its educative mission and attract new and younger audiences, museums need to focus on establishing two-way communication with the public and tailor their online and physical content, such as temporary exhibitions, to adapt to the needs of the public.

Moreover, museums and other cultural institutions should take advantage of the wide thematical variety offered by art collections to adapt their social media content to address current and future social, health, political and economic situations. This would make museums more relatable to the audience and contribute to the use of art to create a more humanized image and an emotional attachment with the public.

Despite the prevalence of the divergence approach (Hung, 2004), it can be convenient for museums, especially small ones, to imitate some strategies implemented by the studied museums. Therefore, these institutions could employ initiatives like presenting a humanized image, showing the work and people behind the museum exhibitions, or prioritizing the public's well-being in their social media communication. Focusing on the public's well-being and safety is also essential. This strategy, applied during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be extended to the organization's regular online communication. This implies expanding the social role of the organization, which in turn can result in a more empathetic and authentic relationship with the public. Additionally, most of these communicational strategies apply to

an everyday context and are not limited to exceptional situations. They can also be applied in organizations from different domains.

      Finally, museums and other firms must adopt technological and content innovations to keep up with the fast-changing digital panorama. Implementing new technologies, embracing new social media platforms, and providing novelty can help organizations maintain their relationship with the public and attract new audiences.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Limitations and Future Research

As observed in the findings, museums used videos to introduce several initiatives. One of the limitations of the present research is the reduced number of Instagram video posts considered for analysis. The restricted quantity of analyzed videos could have conditioned or limited the findings regarding the communicational strategies used by museums. Additionally, this research did not consider other Instagram tools, like live streams, as these were not accessible when the data collection was executed. This sample demarcation connects with a second limitation related to the number of museums selected for the study. Due to feasibility reasons, only three museums were chosen. Moreover, despite representing three different countries, these museums belonged to the European continent. This could have narrowed the theoretical insights and made the findings not applicable to a more worldwide museum communication panorama.

Despite the double focus on the museum's communication on Instagram and public engagement, this research offered no connection between the posts' content and the public's comments. Therefore, findings centered on identifying the different ways the audience engages with museum content but does not determine which communicational strategies are more effective when generating public engagement.

A final limitation of the present study is the time frame selected for the Instagram communication. Due to feasibility reasons and to provide a common point of comparison in all selected museums, only the first six months of the pandemic were considered. This period ensured that the Instagram communication covered closures, de-escalation of the measures, and reopening of all three museums. However, findings do not consider how the communication evolved compared to the period before the health crisis or pinpoint which communication strategies consolidated throughout the pandemic.

6.2. Directions for Future Research

Video is becoming increasingly relevant on visual social media platforms with the creation of the platform TikTok and the introduction of Instagram reels, a short video format (Oltra et al., 2021). Reels were not yet developed during the period studied in this research, but they could represent an interesting study object for future research. Additionally, it is necessary to study how art museums communicate through other social media platforms like TikTok or Facebook to understand how they cultivate engagement with different audiences.

Another possible direction for future research would be centering on how the public engages with different types of museum content. This would provide insights into which communicational strategies are more effective in generating engagement.

Future research can expand the number of museums selected or center on more geographically varied museums to have a clearer image of museum strategic communication worldwide, including museums from continents other than Europe. Moreover, the present study only offers brief insights into how cultural patterns can influence strategic communication in museums. A more extensive study is needed in this regard to acquire an in-depth understanding of to what extent culture has a role in organizational communication.

Finally, to obtain a more accurate image of how communicational strategies have evolved due to the pandemic, it is necessary to conduct a more longitudinal study. Considering the period before the health crisis and the complete duration of the pandemic would help identify how museum communication has developed and what strategies were modified or implemented due to the exceptional situation caused by COVID-19.

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8. Appendixes

Appendix A. Samples of analysis

Figure A1

Analysis for a Comment on the Post R35

	Assigned Codes:
Comment by @rowlingjean: *Evoking happy memories of our visit to a marvelous museum last year.*	◇ Happy memories ⊖ ◇ Praising museum experience ⊖ ◇ Previous visit ⊖

Figure A2

Analysis for a Comment on the Post B15

	Assigned Codes:
Comment by @pierresende: 😍👏👏👏👏👏👏	◇ Applause ⊖ ◇ Heart eyes emoji ⊖

Figure A3

Analysis for a Comment on the Post L19

	Assigned Codes:
Comment by @rileywillow: *Loved seeing this painting. It wasn't large in size but really made an impact on me.*	◇ Describing own museum experience ⊖ ◇ Description artpiece ⊖ ◇ Impact ⊖ ◇ Love for artpiece ⊖ ◇ Physical experience ⊖
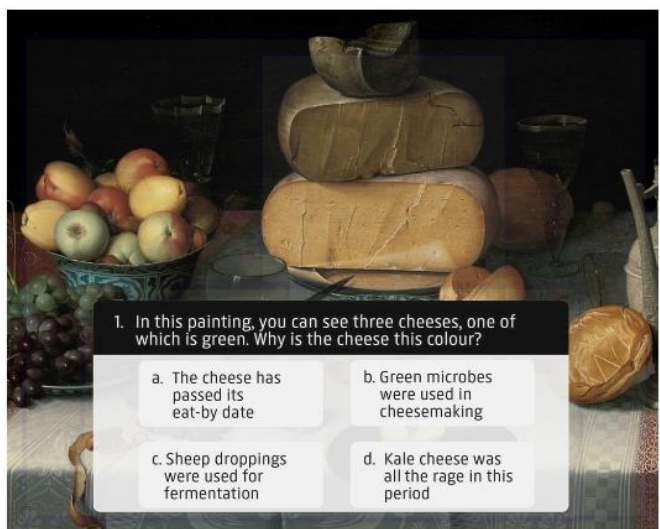
Figure A4

Analysis for a Comment on the Post L19

Comment by @rosyzdeskutsch: @rskutsch @emmaskutschh @mskutschz Let's go back! 🍨⛵. 💞🤍💞🤍	**Assigned Codes:** ◇ Emoji refered to post ⊖ ◇ Heart emoji ⊖ ◇ Propose activity other user ⊖ ◇ Reference to coming back ⊖ ◇ Tag other user ⊖

Figure A5

Analysis for Post R14_B

Figure A6

Analysis for Post L16

Figure A7

Analysis for Post B20_B

Figure A8

Analysis for Post R37_A

Appendix B. Final Codebooks

Table B1

Codebook for the Instagram Posts Dataset

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	CODES FOR SUB-QUESTION 1	
Humanize museum	Creating connections between art and the public	Painting reenactment, Activity about art piece, Daily art objects
Description: Representing the museum as a person, or an	Getting to know the staff	Employees as protagonists, Home of employees, Introducing employees, Opinion employee, Employee working, Personal life employee
organization made out of persons, with emotions and	Getting to know the organization	Museum lab, Museum's educative department, Trainees program, Working environment
personal lives, in order to prompt the	Portraying humans	Human figures, Portrait, Woman portrayed, Self-portrait
identification and empathy of the	Expressing emotions	Excitement, Love, Caring, Happy museum, Need public
public.	Welcoming the public	Welcome public, welcome back, Always welcome
	Missing the public	Missing the public, Waiting for public, See you soon
	Ask for public support	Express need of support, Ask for public's support, Ask for donations, Tickets as donation
Interactivity	Ask for the public's preference	Favorite objects, Favorite way to explore museum, Favorite painting
Description: Offering the public content that motivates	Prompt active role of the public	Challenge/activity for the public, Question to public, Call to action, Instructions to public, Call for interaction, Example of activity
interactiveness, facilitating the participation,	Prompt public sharing and socializing	Invitation to share, Repost, Call to follow, Call for tagging, Social activity

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
socialization, and input of the public.	Public as creator	Ask collaboration from public, Picture from public, Public as donator
	Public input	Sharing picture from user, Ask for feedback, Ask for suggestions, Input from public, Ask to participate
Expanding reach/networking	Celebrate/Commemorate date	Event, Celebration, Commemoration, ·Important date, Event in the city, Holiday, Celebration at home
Description: Create content designed with the goal to reach new audiences, using the USP of the museum. Building alliances or networks with the same groups that the strategic public of organizations do, such as NGOs, unions, and communities.	Celebration museum	Museum day, Good news for museum, Celebrate number of followers
	Following trends	Follow Instagram trend, #2020Challenge, #reesewitherspoonchallenge, #ThrowbackThursday, Cooking, Public figures, Daily activities
	Use of general hashtags	Hashtag popular element, #tulip, #inspiration, #science, #landscapes, #nature, Connection to other event, Sports, Fashion, Hashtag activity, Hashtag painting material
	Identification and self-promotion	Hashtag formal and informal museum name, Showing masterpiece, Hashtag location, Hashtag art period, Hashtag painting style, Mention masterpiece, Famous monument, Logo, Landmarks of museum's city, Highlights of collection, Famous people
	Invitation to follow	Invitation to follow content, Invitation to follow accounts
	Partnerships, collaborations and sponsorships	Partners or sponsors, Support Donors/Funds, Video credits, Guests in

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
		museum, Traditional media, Elements from partners or suppliers
	Relationship with other museums	Mention of other collections/museums, Collaboration other museums, United collections UK, Loaned objects, Praise other museum, Reopening other museum, Joint effort of museums, Hashtag other museum, Gallery that lends, Photo other museum, Link to other museum
	Social media campaigns	#MuseumFromHome, #LouvreDetails, #LouvreChezVous, #HomeLearning, #RijksmuseumFromHome, #LouvreAtFirstSight, #MonÉtéMaRégion, #RijksDetails
	Temporary exhibitions	Mention temporary exhibition, Sneak peek into exhibition, Information exhibitions, Upcoming exhibitions, Previous exhibitions
Prioritize Safety and Health *Description: Show through published content that the priority of the museum is the well-being and safety of its public and staff.*	Closed Museum	Closed museum, No visitors, Temporary closure, Closed gardens
	Connecting art and COVID-19	Art piece with facemask, Art piece in lockdown, Museums' response to Covid.
	Effects of COVID-19	Reference to COVID-19, Covid restrictions, Facemasks, Social distancing, Reminder Covid, Covid as worldwide phenomenon
	Empty spaces	Empty picture (no people), No human figures, Empty museum, Empty streets, Empty chairs

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	Isolated figures	Lonely figure, Not crowdy, No accumulation of people
	Wide shot	Wide shots, Wide Spaces, Open Spaces, Aerial Shots
	Well-being public/staff	Safe museum experience, Stay at Home, Stay safe, Safety first, Well-being, Enjoy in Safety, Preparing museum for Covid, Health recommendation, Safety as priority.
	Outside activity	Outside, nature, Activity outside, People outside, Sailing boats, Enjoy outside, Paint outside.
	Museum's open air spaces	Gardens of museum, Museum exterior, Hashtag garden museum
Positivity *Description: Organizational effort to sustain pleasant interactions, thus benefiting strategic publics with more enjoyable interactions.*	Nature	Outside, nature, Natural element, Animal in painting, Green, Flowers, Art piece about nature, Landscape, Organic elements
	Use of color	Bright colors, Warm colors, Vibrant colors, Muted colors, Light colors.
	Light in image	Well illuminated room, Contrasting light, Dramatic light, Light room, Turning lights on, Dark vs. Light, Bright
	Quiet and calm	Relaxing environment, Relaxing activity, Calm painting, Relaxed painting
	Daily good wishes	Nice wishes, Good weekend, Good day, Good week
	Expressing gratitude	Thanks to public, Thanks for following, Thanks
	Hope and expectations for the future	Museum's promise, Future plans, Create expectation, Return to

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
		museum, Hope, Promise updates, Premiere
	Inspiring or motivating public	Collection as inspiration, Prompt creativity, Congratulations to public, Imagination of art, Encourage public, Crafts, Inspiration at home, Inspiring phrase.
	Triggering emotions	Excitement for museum experience, Appeal to understanding, Enthusiasm, Anticipation, Love for museum, Appealing to emotion, Crush for museum
	Aesthetic	Opulence, Beauty, Artistic appearance
	Weather in picture	Nice weather, Sunny day, Summer, Sunset, Dramatic sky, Clear sky, Spring
Entertainment	Games	Quiz, Test public's knowledge
	Humor	Funny element, Sound effect, April's Fools, Joke
Description: *Designing museum's social media content*	Novelty	New painting, New content on website, New on blog
offer leisure and	Public enjoyment	Enjoy from home, Enjoy museum, Enjoy museum again, Enjoy outside
therefore compete *with other leisure* *activities.*	Spark interest	Curious data about art piece, Invitation to explore, Curiosity about museum, Special, Mystery, Attractive information, Peculiar art, Special guests
	Storytelling	Story art piece, Story artist, Storytelling activity, Stories from staff, Success stories
	Providing distraction	Escapism, Invitation to relax, Relief in museum, Break from reality

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	Recommendation to the public	Entertainment recommendations, Exploring recommendations, Play music, List, Artist book
Emphasis on physicality *Description: The organization using its digital communication platforms to remind the audience of the physical location of the organization, prompting to return to a physical experience when possible.*	Return to physical experience	Invitation to come back, Physical activity for the public, Expectation: Return to museum, Include public in picture, Reencounter with art, Enjoy art physically, Life in the museum
	Imitate physical experience	Art pieces in context, Replicate museum experience, Moving through museum, Describe physical museum experience, Reenactment of a physical activity
	Physical location museum	Room in museum, Location of Museum, Museum building, Gardens of museum, Inside museum building, History of room/gallery,
	Portray normality	Photo pre-corona, Show face of public, Back to normal.
Social and economic pillar *Description: The organization expresses through its social media communication, its*	Diversity and inclusion	Woman employee, Women in science, Woman of color, Racial issue, Sensory friendly visit, Man of color, Women artist, Women History Month
	Educating the public	More information, Art materials, Link to blog, Digital learning tool, #HomeLearning, About the artist, About the art piece, Learn from art,

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
role on society and local economy, by addressing social and economic issues	Connecting with the youth	Explanation in detail art piece, Explaining history. Tools for children, Young public, Children activity, Trainees, Inspire children, Creativity for children, Jobs for younger generations.
	Museum for families	Family activity, Family of employee, Family as public
	Role in region or community	Promote local region, Promote national tourism, #MonÉtéMaRégion, Role in country economy
	Social commentary	Religious element, LGBTQ, Social cause, Morale content, Racial issue, Gender equality
	Value of art	Virtues of art, Relevance of museum, Careful manipulation of art, Relevant art piece.
CODES FOR SUB-QUESTION 2		
Promote national culture	National culture	Dutch painting, Dutch art, French art, Royal characters, Elements of Dutch culture, Dutch holiday, French culture
Description: The museum using its collection and digital communication to promote its national culture.	About history	Museum history, History of room/gallery, History of art piece, French history, Dutch history, British history, Old pictures museum
	Celebrate/Commemorate date	Event, Celebration, Commemoration, ·Important date, Event in the city, Holiday, Celebration at home
	Role in region or community	Promote local region, Promote national tourism, #MonÉtéMaRégion, Role in country economy

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
Universal culture *Description: The museum using its collection and digital communication to promote diverse cultures and reach multicultural audiences.*	Ancient art	Ancient Egypt, Ancient art, Ancient culture, Ancient Rome, Ancient Greece, Viking history, Chinese art
	Mythology	Mythological stories, Mythical creatures, Gods,
	Multiculturality	Foreign art piece, Foreign culture, Habits of different cultures, Cultural elements, Cultures around the world
	Museum reach	Worldwide reach, Use of several languages, Museum from everywhere, Use of English, Subtitles in English, Museum in the distance
Content and digital innovation *Description: The organization relying on technological tools and diverse innovative content in order to engage the public.*	Virtual tools	Virtual tour, Virtual tourism, Explore city virtually, #HomeLearning, Online event, Online collection, Live broadcast, Google Street view, Audio guide at home, Virtual Gallery
	Digital Technology	Animation, High-resolution, Visual effects, Digital channels, Digital resources, Immersive experience
	Following trends	Follow Instagram trend, #2020Challenge, #reesewitherspoonchallenge, #ThrowbackThursday, Cooking, Public figures, Daily activities
	Social media campaigns	#MuseumFromHome, #LouvreDetails, #LouvreChezVous, #HomeLearning, #RijksmuseumFromHome, #LouvreAtFirstSight, #MonÉtéMaRégion, #RijksDetails
	Humor	Funny element, Sound effect, April's Fools, Joke

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	Games	Quiz, Test public's knowledge
	Novelty	New painting, New content on website, New on blog
Humans in organization *Description: The organization emphasizing its human component (staff), and their role in the organization.*	Life during lockdown	Working from home, Quarantine life, Monotony of lockdown
	Getting to know staff	Employees as protagonists, Home of employees, Introducing employees, Opinion employee, Employee working, Personal life employee
	Getting to know organization	Museum lab, Museum's educative department, Trainees program, Working environment
	Team effort	Team work, Meet the team, Introducing team
	Well-being staff/public	Safe museum experience, Stay at Home, Stay safe, Safety first, Well-being, Enjoy in Safety, Preparing museum for Covid, Health recommendation, Safety as priority.
Prioritizing Collection *Description: The museum centers on promoting their collecting on their social media platforms.*	About art piece	Information art piece (Year, author, etc.), Introducing art piece, Interpretation art piece, Symbols in art piece, Explanation of details, Purpose of art piece
	About artist	Artist inspiration, Artist perspective, Life of artist, Artist Signature
	About art piece origin	Written report as inspiration, Personal collection as inspiration, Traditional African Art, Place of origin, Date of origin, Reconstruction, Anonymous, Photos of origin, Commissioned painting

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	Identification and self-promotion	Hashtag formal and informal name museum, Showing masterpiece, Hashtag location, Hashtag art period, Hashtag painting style, Mention masterpiece, Famous monument, Logo, Landmarks of museum's city, Highlights of collection, Famous people
	Praise collection	Praising adjectives masterpiece, Praising adjectives collection
CODES FOR SUB-QUESTION 4		
Accessibility *Description: Offering though a social media platform practical information and access to other platforms and digital tools from the organization, creating a connection between different channels.*	Contact information	Telephone number, Email contact
	Link to other platforms	Link to website, Link to blog, Link to to other social media, Facebook, Newsletters, Link to webshop, YouTube, Google Street View
	More access to museum	Use of several languages, Research and programs, Share collections, Art piece not in museum, Public first to know
	Practical information	Tickets, Announcement, Event, Latest information, Refunds, Message from leadership, According to government
	Experience museum from home	Virtual experience, #MuseumFromHome, Explore museum virtually, Online event, Activities at home
	Museum reach	Worldwide reach, Use of several languages, Museum from everywhere, Use of English, Subtitles in English, Museum in the distance
	Inform reopening	Reopening, #OpenAgain, Reminder of opening, Preparation for reopening, Reopening gardens

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
Education tool *Description: Use of initiatives or published content to educate the public, not only in art but other subjects.*	Learning resources	Image banks, Videos, Blog, School curriculum, Origami, Collection online
	Educating the public	More information, Art materials, Link to blog, Digital learning tool, #HomeLearning, About the artist, Learn from art, Explanation in detail art piece, Explaining history.
	Connecting with the youth	Tools for children, Young public, Children activity, Trainees, Inspire children, Creativity for children, Jobs for younger generations.
Expanded information *Description: The museum providing more in-depth information about the collection, art pieces, history or the museum itself to the public.*	About artist	Artist inspiration, Artist perspective, Life of artist, Artist Signature
	About art piece	Information art piece (Year, author, etc.), Introducing art piece, Interpretation art piece, Symbols in art piece, Explanation of details, Purpose of art piece
	About art piece origin	Written report as inspiration, Personal collection as inspiration, Traditional African Art, Place of origin, Date of origin, Reconstruction, Anonymous, Photos of origin, Commissioned painting
	About history	Museum history, History of room/gallery, History of art piece, French history, Dutch history, British history, Old pictures museum
	Descriptions	Description of art piece, Description of museum room, Description collection, Description exhibition other museum, Description ancient city

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	About architecture	Ceiling, Columns, Arch, Pyramid, Windows, Modern architectural elements, Buildings, Architectonical remains
	Museum findings	Discovery, Guess, Investigation, Hidden details in art piece.
Offer a closer look *Description: Using communication on social media to offer the public a closer look to the collection and art pieces, including different angles, and details.*	Closer look	Zoom in, #LouvreDetails, #RijksDetails, Details, Texture, Symbols, Patterns, Brushstrokes, Facial features
	Focus	Neutral background, Blurry background, Focus on room, Deepness of photo
	Every angle	Front and back, Underneath, From above, Frame, New angle
	Visual portrayal	Visual effects, Showing masterpieces, Showing less known pieces, Art representing art.
Improved museum experience *Description: The museum using technology or content on social media to offer the public a new or improved experience, instead of an imitation of a traditional museum visit.*	Various formats	Video, Live broadcast, Timelapse, Illustration maps, Sculptures, Still life, Drawing, Horizontal, Vertical
	Digital technology	Animation, High-resolution, Visual effects, Digital channels, Digital resources, Immersive experience
	Social media campaigns	#MuseumFromHome, #LouvreDetails, #LouvreChezVous, #HomeLearning, #RijksmuseumFromHome, #LouvreAtFirstSight, #MonÉtéMaRégion, #RijksDetails
	Travel from home	Back in time, Virtual tourism, Travel guide, Imagined trip, Explore city virtually

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	Virtual tools	Virtual tour, Virtual tourism, Explore city virtually, #HomeLearning, Online event, Online collection, Live broadcast, Google Street view, Audio guide at home, Virtual Gallery
Creating a new relationship with public *Description: The organization offering the public a new role within the museum, diverting from the traditional passive visitor.*	Ask for public preference	Favorite objects, Favorite way to explore museum, Favorite painting
	Museum tag	
	Prompt public active role	Challenge/activity for the public, Question to public, Call to action, Instructions to public, Call for interaction, Example of activity
	Prompt loyalty	Invitation to return, Loyal public, Invitation to follow
	Public acknowledgment	#LouvreChezVous, Always connected, #Rijksviews
	Public as creator	Ask collaboration from public, Picture from public, Public as donator

Table B2

Codebook for the Comments Dataset

Selective Code (Themes)	Axial Code (Subgroups)	Open Codes
	CODES FOR SUB-QUESTION 3	
Information consumption and input	Opinion/Interpretation	Opinion, interpretation of art piece, Favorite for user, Reflection on life, Political opinion, Opinion on initiative
Description: The public engages by consuming the information	Ask questions	Question about art piece, Ask for more details, Ask for information, Ask for practical information, Help finding content, Ask about reopening
published by the organization and by	Additional information	History fact, Curious fact art piece, Information about event, Link to another website, Personal experience
giving their own input to this information	Requests	Request content, Ask for accessibility, Ask for opinion, Ask for update, Express needs, Ask for female art pieces
	Comparison	Comment about other museum, Similarities art pieces, Compare museums, Compare art piece and movie, Compare cities
	Recommendation	Share tip to other users, Share tip to museum, Recommendation about Covid, Recommend content
	Interaction with the museum	Answer question by museum, Guess, Tag same museum
Sense of presence	Praise	Praise art piece, Praise picture, Praise initiative, Praise museum, Praising adjectives
Description: Assessing the engagement experience by	Entertained	Laughing emoji, Joke, Wink emoji, Interesting, Funny element, Use of sarcasm, Laugh

evaluating aspects like the entertaining value provided by the organization or the cognitive investment.	Impressed	Star emoji, Wow, Fire emoji, Surprise, Star eye emoji, OMG, Excitement, Explosion emoji, Fireworks emoji
	Learning	Appreciate research/learning, Discover new information, Love learning more, Nerd emoji, Express curiosity, Express wonder
	Approval	Applause emoji, Thumbs up emoji, Okay hand emoji, Express approval
	Aesthetical experience	Express beauty, Pleasure to eyes, Beauty lovers
	Value museum	Vindicate art, Museum as treasure
	Admiration	Role model, Admiration for public figure
Interest immersion *Description: Self-expression of the public in order to fulfill an emotional need. The public expresses their emotions regarding the organization, the published content and social issues.*	Emotional attachment	Heart emoji, Heart eyes emoji, Love for art piece, Missing museum, Love for museum, Kiss emoji
	Gratitude	Thanks to museum, Praying hands emoji, Thanks for initiative, Thanks for sharing, Thanks for useful information, Thanks to staff
	Social Commenting	Lack of diversity, Religious thoughts, Racial comment, Tokenism, Pride, Black lives matter
	Celebration	Celebrate good news, Excitement for reopening, Celebration emoji, Toast emoji, Congratulations
	Humanizing	Talking to art piece, Alive painting, Travel in time, Talk to artist, Naming people from museum
	Reference to employees	Importance of staff, Care provided by staff, Curator experience, Respect for work, Professional aspiration

	Wishes	Hope for reopening, Wish good day, Wish for physical experience, Wish Covid is over, Wish come true
	Expressiveness	All caps, Yummy emoji, Screaming emoji, Embarrassed emoji
	Loyalty	Defending museum, Express membership, Reference to coming back
	Negative emotions	Thumb down emoji, Sad emoji, Angry emoji, Broken heart emoji, Crying emoji, Pejorative adjectives
	Happiness	Smiley emoji, Happy at museum
Social interactivity	Promotion	Promoting own account, Ask to follow, Tag other museum, Promoting external product, Offering content, Tag art account
Description: Interpersonal connections. Individuals may use social media to share experiences with others, win the approval of others, or find like-minded people.	Personal experience	Experience at museum, Previous visit, Personal connection to art piece/artist, Describe own museum experience, Happy memories, Anecdote
	Interaction with users	Tag other user, Conversation between users, Propose activity, Opinion to another user, Showing post to user, Recommendation to user.
	Greetings	Handwave emoji, Salute, Greetings to museums, Greetings to other users
	Empathy	Cheering others, Crisis shall pass, Acknowledge uplifting content
	Show user's origin	Flag emoji foreign location, Location of origin, Invitation to country
Share exceptional situation	COVID-19	Reference to Covid-19 rules, Ask to stay safe, Facemasks, Question safety, Ask to stay healthy

Description: Users sharing their experience, worries, wishes and recommendations regarding the situation caused by the pandemic.	Experience physical museum	Wish to visit, Need to return, See you soon, Reopening, Future visit, Wish for physical experience
	Virtual experience	Praise virtual visit, All content online, Together in the distance, Enjoying from home
Question organization	Doubt museum	Criticizing museum, Question museum's explanation, Criticizing post, Criticizing initiative, Questioning closure
Description: User doubting the role and actions of the organization. Accusing of robbery and cultural appropriation	Appropriation/Accusation	Stolen from origin, Return pieces to origin, Flag emoji art piece origin, Accusation robbery, Museum as thieves, Colonial past, Colonial domination
	Negative emotions	Thumb down emoji, Sad emoji, Angry emoji, Broken heart emoji, Crying emoji, Pejorative adjectives

Appendix C. Code trees

Figure C1

Code Tree for Sub-Question 1.

Figure C2

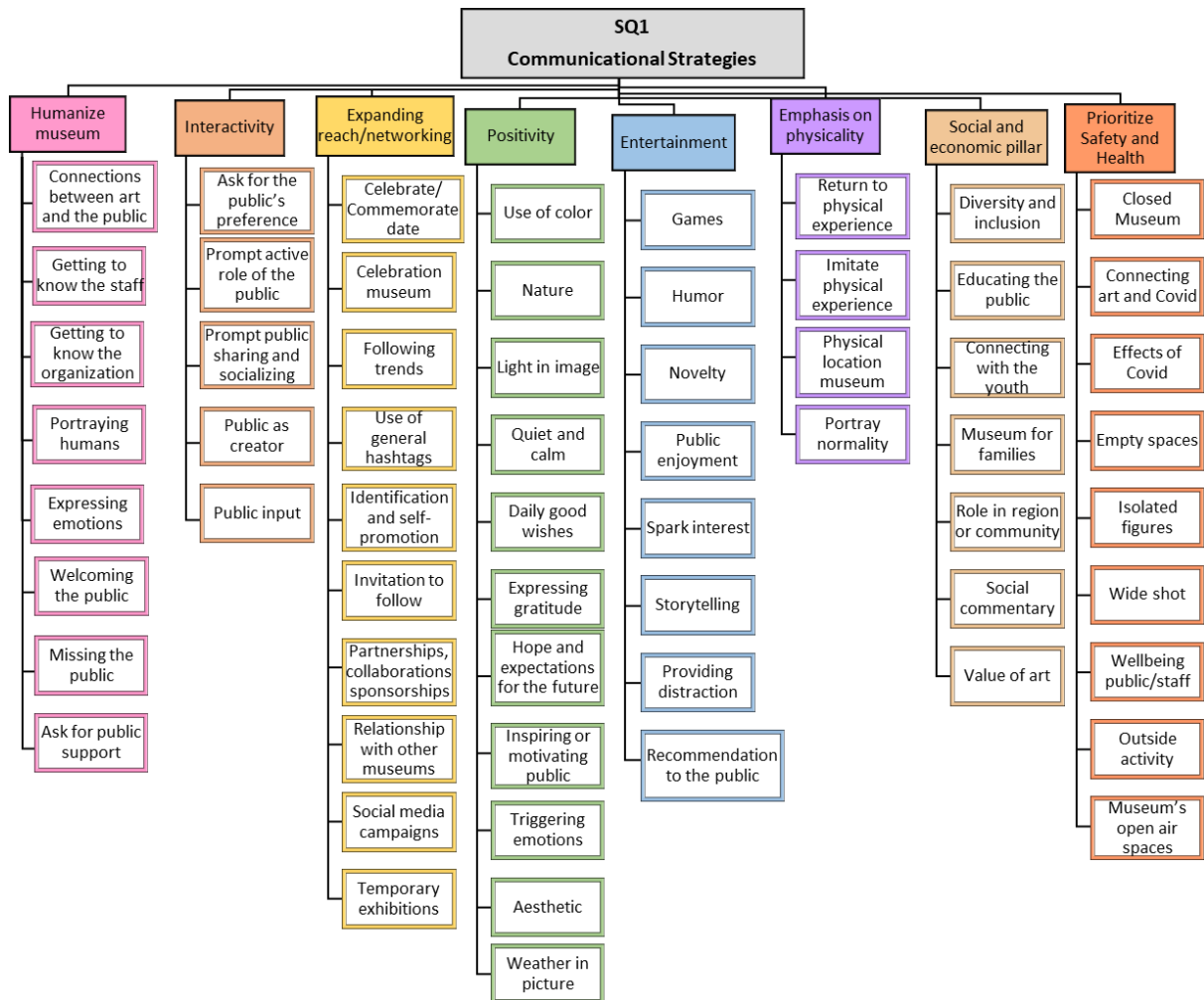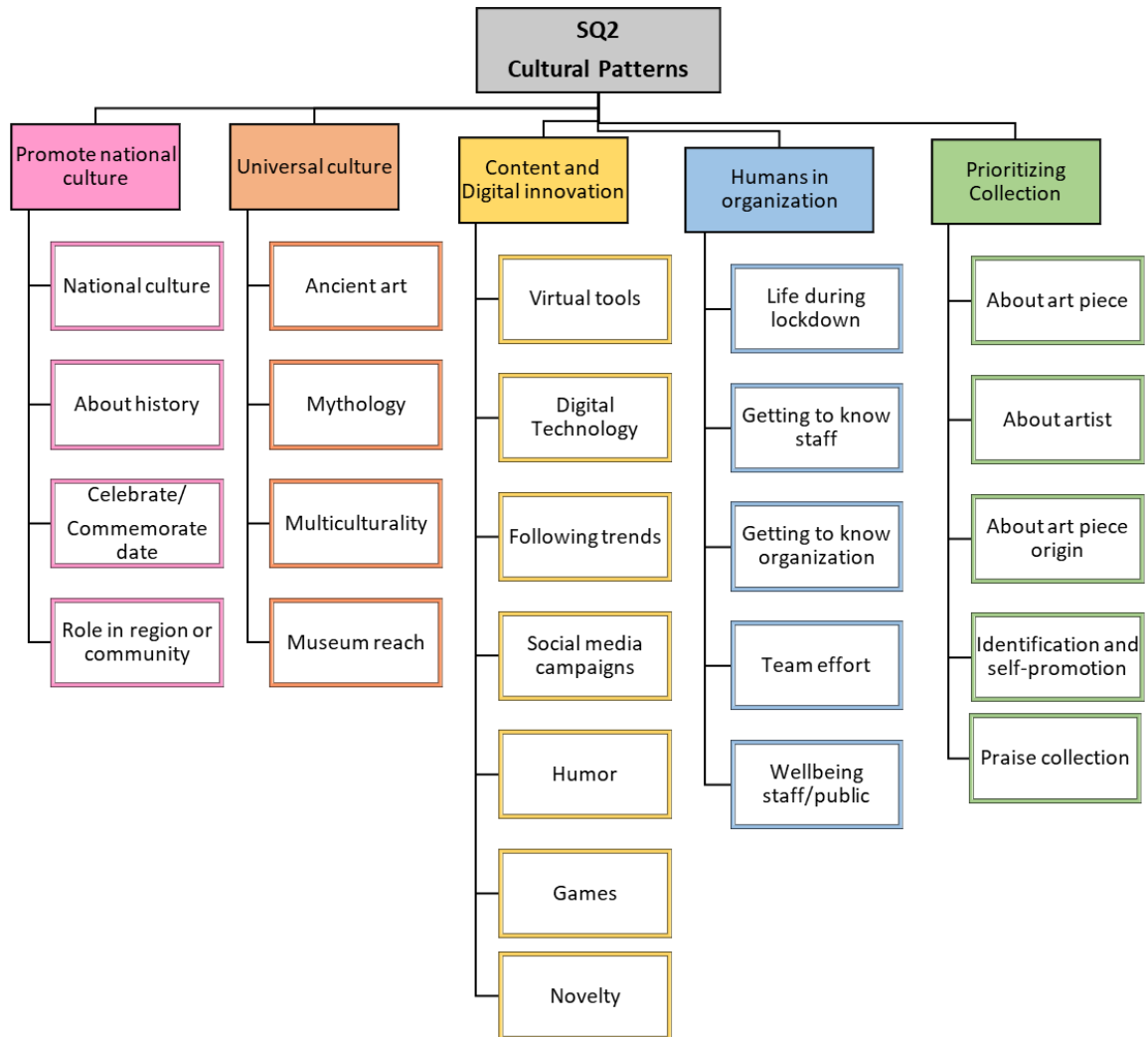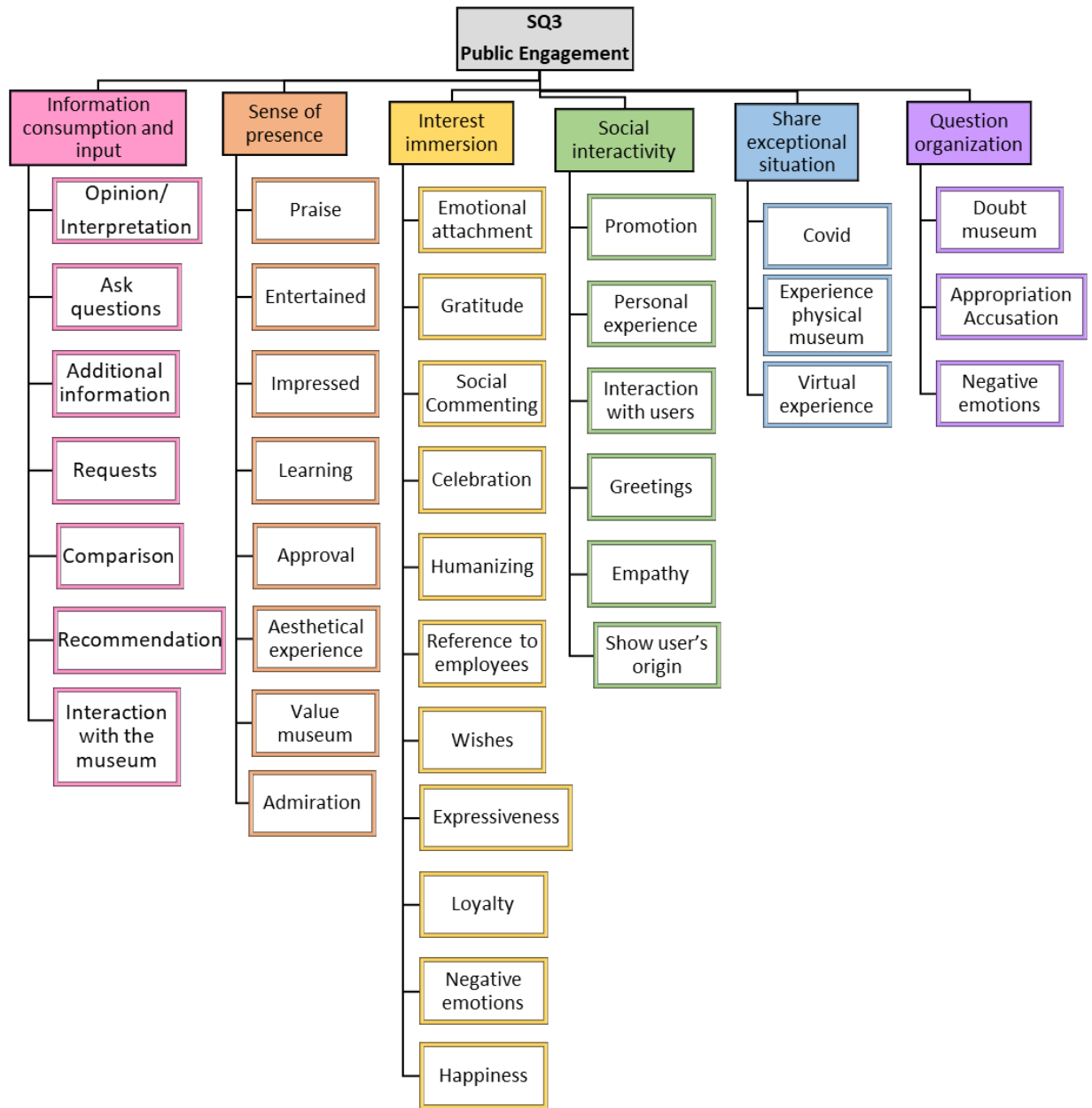*Code Tree for Sub-Question 2.*

Figure C3

Code tree for sub-question 3

Figure C4

Code Tree for Sub-Question 4