Digital Culture & Education (DCE)

YouTube as the art commons? Strategies, perceptions and outcomes of museums' online video portals

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PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

YOUTUBE AS THE ART COMMONS? STRATEGIES, PERCEPTIONS AND OUTCOMES OF MUSEUMS' ONLINE VIDEO PORTALS

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Abstract: *The current study investigates the phenomenon of museum communication through online video hostings, either by using YouTube or a customized platform. The videos uploaded by museums present a combination of educational and entertaining content depending on their objectives, attracting users to watch art content online. While the literature on uses and gratification is highly represented in media studies, few studies exist about the specific user motivations and gratifications of new media platforms in a museum context. Three types of users were identified in this study. The first type – art-oriented users – display extrinsic motivation towards art exploration and seek for videos with educational content. The second type and the most widespread on these spaces – entertainment-oriented users – are intrinsically motivated and concentrate on the entertaining content of museum videos. Users of the last type are averse to exploring art content online, unless they are defined as non-art related. Overall, this paper argues that as art becomes a cultural product to be consumed online, popular video portals such as YouTube serve as an important platform to facilitate this democratizing effect, with varied implications for the art world.*

Keywords: YouTube, art, edutainment, gratifications, museums, online videos, user motivations, Web 2.0

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 80s, museums started to converge with a booming leisure industry and constitute an important part within the entertainment field (Burton & Scott, 2003). Art museums are commonly regarded as the most conservative and distant from this industry, although art and popular culture largely share a tradition in visual culture and storytelling. Since online video portals started to take off in 2005 with the launch of YouTube, videos are increasingly seen as an important tool for art museums to reach out to their audiences and fulfill their educational mission, at the same time offering a space for entertainment online.

This has raised important questions for museum managers, mainly focused on how to optimally attract users to their website through art video content online. How can museums' video portals engage users and what target groups should they cater to? In other words, *how do museums engage users and what are the different motivations for consuming online art video spaces?* This requires a review of strategies museums currently use in their online activity, followed by an inquiry into the nature of users' motivations to engage with these online spaces and their perceptions and gratifications from this activity. The current study applies a qualitative content analysis of three different video portals of museums with differing objectives and conducts interviews with online visitors of these spaces. Three different types of users are identified, which could further develop museums' online strategies and tactics in engaging audiences.

Overall, engagement can be a powerful tool to enable the digital sphere to be a new kind of 'art commons' where the public can consume art as a community. Online video

sites such as YouTube serve as a fresh means to redefine what constitutes as effective communication strategies in the art world. This moves away from the long perceived image of museums being exclusive-oriented to one that is more open to public involvement. This paper focuses on the typology of user engagement with art based video portals, arguing that user gratification is closely aligned with community belonging, in spite of the overarching elitism in the art world. And while YouTube can stimulate a more democratic space within a much gated community of art enthusiasts, the quality of participation is challenging to administer. This situates museums in a dilemma as the current economic climate compels them to expand participation and yet, their persistent role as society's cultural gatekeepers compels them to exercise their expertise on what counts as quality art experience.

Review of Literature

Shifting Museum Landscape: From Custodial to Audience-oriented
Over the past three decades, the primary focus of museums has shifted towards the public, placing communication in a more central role. This has been a consequence of political, economic and socio-cultural changes in the museum field, such as the growing competition with other leisure activities, reductions in state funding and the advent of the Internet. Currently, museums have adopted a new social function as their mission in society, defined by the International Council Of Museums in 2007 (ICOM; affiliated to UNESCO) as follows: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." [1]

Museums have thus moved from a custodial, collection-centered approach to a marketing, audience-centered approach, a move which can be divided in three development periods: a foundation period (1975-1983), a professionalization period (1988-1993) and the current entrepreneurial period (1994-now) (Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002). Whereas the foundation period of museum marketing started to stimulate visitor studies and educational research, the professionalization period marked a real cultural change with the addition of marketing departments and the distribution of power to external stakeholders. Currently, museums' accountability to society is evident in their primal function as educators of cultural heritage. Museums are expected to deliver three essential and interrelated services namely, education, accessibility and communication. Education, as the core element of museums, is focused on educating the public on the nature and range of its collection, while communication includes the nature and scope of the interaction with visitors. Accessibility is the proximity to the core product and the availabilty of museum services.

The Internet constitutes an important extension of the service industry which has changed the way of marketing and communication and increased the level of internationalization. Museums are compelled to go online, as these new platforms are seen to provide the public with added 'digital value' to their visitor experience. In addition, the museum can fundamentally benefit from an online presence as it is able to cater directly to their loyal visitors, reach a large potential public, and create new and surprising digital experiments to engage the audience with the upcoming exhibits (Lagrosen, 2003). In this latter area, American museums are at the forefront, mainly due to the long commercial tradition of its non-profit sector (Toepler & Dewees, 2005). New ICTs have inclined museums to be where their public is, and social media is becoming a preferred platform for new kinds of interactions.

For museum managers, it is not only important to educate and inform visitors, but also to stimulate discussions in order to receive feedback and ideas from the community (Arends *et al.*, 2009). The interactive and open nature of social media applications is especially suitable for this purpose. The signficant increase of social networking sites (SNS) have ignited the need for more understanding of online user behavior and motivations (Russo *et al.*, 2008). Besides this strategic opportunity for museums to create dialogue with their online visitors, there is also an opportunity for them to promote the museum online and generate revenues (e.g. web shops). However, against these benefits, museum management also needs to consider the potential loss of control over information and notions of quality within the democratic Web 2.0 arena of amateur knowledge (Arora & Vermeylen, 2013).

Museum's Digital Communication Strategies
Despite today's omnnipresence of the Internet in the museum sector, specific research on its adoption and reflection remain partial and limited. However, in recent years some explorative studies on the importance of online value creation have surfaced. Hausmann (2012), for example, argues that "[i]n times of a general information overflow, declining credibility of traditional communication tools and a continued shortage of resources in the cultural sector, the fact that these web-based applications can facilitate viral marketing and stimulate word-of-mouth is of special interest to arts institutions" (p. 174). This is strengthened by the fact that cultural institutions like museums usually offer an experience good whose quality can only be determined after consumption. Online word-of-mouth facilitated by social networking sites thus is an important marketing tool in creating a 'buzz' around exhibitions. However, this does require a good online communication strategy, which is usually limited by a general shortage of time and personnel within the arts sector (Hausmann, 2012).

Previous research on online strategies by Lagrosen (2003) distinguished three general strategies employed by museums: *avoidance*, *content*, and *technological*. The first one was an overall strategy of 'being there,' but at an absolute minimal level of effort, whereas the content strategy implied higher efforts in uploading content using simple technology. The last communication strategy is meant to gain a leadership position by uploading quality content on a technologically sophisticated platform. Interestingly, a study by Padilla-Melendez & del Áquila-Obra (2013) found similar strategies employed today, namely *defender*, *analyser*, and *prospector* strategies. The defender sees the online space merely as a complement and informational brochure. The analyser gladly uses the interactivity of such media as an expansion strategy, but does not take in an online leadership position like the prospector, who makes high efforts in creating high online value for visitors. Chung, Marcketti and Fiore (2014) take this art marketing literature a step further and developed three strategies for relationship marketing using SNS. The first strategy, *awareness*, includes placing content on as many platforms as possible in order to initiate relationships and raise awareness of exhibitions and activities among the public. The aim of the second strategy, *comprehension*, is to enhance visitors' knowledge of the museum mission and to strenghten existing bonds by using only a few platforms and integrating them. Finally, the third strategy, *engagement*, aims to create and sustain an online community by continuous conversations between visitors and museum staff. This entails a good understanding among personnel of the features of SNS.

Particularly, the popularity of YouTube (which since its start in 2005 currently takes third place on Internet traffic rankings [2]), has lured many museums. In 2006, New York's Museum of Modern Art solicited the public to weigh in via YouTube on the choice of finalists for their exhibition. This was seen as a new trend by museums to harness the popularity of online communities and cater to the new generation of art

fans. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, curator Barbara London of MoMa claimed this to be iconic: "It's like Andy Warhol and his can of Campbell's soup, almost. (…) It's a brand. It's very much now. It's alive" (Lavallee, 13 October 2006). According to Yehuda (2008), the nature of video hosting allows organizations to personalize their approach towards consumers and to create a level of intimacy unbeknownst before.

This last remark is close to the argument of Burgess and Green(2013) on YouTube's participatory culture. They argue that online videos on YouTube should be understood in the context of everyday media practice. Users can now easily upload content and make sense of the world around them by narrating and communicating their (cultural) experiences. In this, uploading content on YouTube can be understood as a meaning-making process, and not merly as an attempt to work around the mighty media industry. This hits, what the writers call, the 'YouTube-ness of YouTube', or its shared culture. The authors further argue that it is not helpful to draw a sharp line between professional and amateur videos, or commercial and community practices: this industrial logic does not apply in a cultural system with its coherent cultural logic. According to Goldberg (2011), these two logics are inescapably intertwined with each other due to the economization of online participation. Whereas most new media scholars celebrate the liberating and empowering nature of Web 2.0 applications, scholars like Beer (2009) and Goldberg (2011) call for more critique of this assertions, stating that online participation places users in a network of power relations. Digital players like YouTube earn a lot of money over the backs of their users, while promoting themselves through such liberating claims as 'Broadcast Yourself'. Hence, within this new digital commons, empowerment can be deeply corportized and monetized.

Greenfield (2008) argues that museums need to address a range of issues before starting any social networking project like video hosting. These issues include security, placing software management in-house or outsourcing it, monitoring protocols for user-generated content and the assessment of the tool's success. New media professionals are furthermore faced with identifying and stating the project's mission and main objectives (Marty, 2007). When executed properly, these social media platforms can more fully engage users, promote the museum and create an online community (Kidd, 2010). In addition to functioning as an educational tool, entertainment is also recognized among scholars to be an important constituent of the online visitor experience.

The decision to open up an online video channel on platforms like YouTube is mainly based on its people-friendliness, cost-effectiveness and minimal technical demand (Greenfield, 2008). In addition, it includes a loss of control over content, which provides museums some leverage for experiment. Examples can be found where museums have passed down control to users by requesting for video contributions and limiting their role to mainly curating these videos, as for instance with the exhibition of the The Resident art group at the Museum of Modern Art in 2006. On the other hand, there is also the strategy of customizing online video portals, such as that of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Their self-developed video portal *ArtBabble* is considered as a best practice within the field. Museum staff named several reasons for keeping control over their online video content (and those of partner institutions), which involved among others the creation of a cost-effective space for high definition videos with no advertising disturbing the view (as opposed to the highly commercial YouTube), the ability to design their own governance protocols and to build an online brand (cooperatively), and last but not least, providing a specific and unique platform for a niche community of art lovers (Stein *et al.*, 2010).

Users of online museum videos

In the past, visitors were seen as 'zombies' mindlessly taking in what the museum host told them, but todays' online marketing by museums reflect a changing mind-set (Hooper-Greenhill, 2013). Web 2.0 platforms such as video hostings allow users to participate more fully in cultural issues, control the information they receive from these media and enable them to provide feedback. Besides being a "powerful educational and motivational tool" (Duffy, 2008: 124), online video platforms are also a significant discovery tool, where users encounter novel content.

Kidd (2010) argues that if users of museum websites and related social media find these spaces attractive, the level of users' awareness and loyalty towards museums rises. In addition, Arends *et al.* (2009) emphasizes the participatory attitude of users online: as online visitors are able to create art online, which can be viewed and commented on by others, these spaces can add value to the visitor experience. While these studies are helpful, there is insufficient literature in this area, particularly on the range of motivations and behaviors of users in museum studies. Hence, we adopt the enjoyment or gratifications framing of new media use to look into the user's motivations in choosing certain media, as the type of pleasure gained from media shapes individual's evaluation and perception of the larger context at hand, in this case, the museums (Ruggiero, 2000).

Gratifications are highly dependent on the needs or motivations consumers have to fulfill in their media usage and vice versa. The study by Lin *et al.* (2010) for example builds upon the premise that informal learning on museum websites is influenced by the emotional experience and enjoyment of these spaces. We identify three prime motivations here that lead users to discover museums' online video spaces, inspired by the model of pleasures presented by Bosshart and Macconi (1998, in Vorderer, 2001): entertainment, education and socialization.

Even though entertainment appears to be the strongest motivation behind media use, people also seek pleasures from gaining knowledge (Bryant & Vorderer, 2013). These users show a strong preference towards learning that is especially apparent within the museum context. Mediated learning is especially deemed effective when it brings enjoyment which highlights the importance of the socio-technical archicture of the media space, as argued by Lin *et al.* (2010). In their study of museum websites, they find that important design characteristics for encouraging informal learning are novelty, harmonization of the space, and proper facilitations.

Finally, users also seek relations with others through the mediated space, which has been facilitated by the interactive web. These new Web 2.0 communities allow users to share preferences and pleasantries, to discuss and argue, and to participate in the intellectual discourse and exchange knowledge (Jankowski, 2006). Three motives for media usage, entertainment, learning and feeling connected to a community, are interrelated to each other, as users can have different motivations at the same time. Concepts as 'edutainment' and 'infotainment' for example show that the user's experience with media is often multidimensional. After all, many scholars argue that entertainment is an important prerequisite for the processing of information (e.g. Duffy, 2008; Lin *et al.*, 2010). However, the literature does make a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. According to Ruggiero (2000), "individuals either intentionally seek out information or ritualistically use specific communication media channels or messages" (p. 9). When people are extrinsically motivated, they show goal-directed behavior in their activity where they purposively seek out certain benefits and want to meet specific expectations. Their online activity is cognitive and the entertaining aspects of the content have a less emotional impact on them (Novak *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand, intrinsically motivated users are more experimental and affective in their behavior,

and they prefer a bottom-up approach in their 'online journey'. As Bilgram *et al.* (2008) articulate, "intrinsic motivation results from the activity itself conveying a feeling of enjoyment, exploration and creativity to the users and enabling them to make full use of their potential" (p.441).

To conclude, museums have recently become more commited to their visitors, and in the production of their online spaces they take account of their user's preferences and desired outcomes. Museums therefore pay much attention to the way they set up their video portals while keeping an eye on their educational function. On the other hand, in the consumption of these spaces the context of online video platforms matters. Users gain satisfaction or certain gratifications out of watching online museum videos; they are engaged in the activity, feel a positive affect in its consumption or fulfill certain needs. Usually, they are motivated by a need to be entertained, to learn something and/or to socialize with persons with the same interests, emotions or morals, and are either extrinsically or intrinsically motivated to engage with this activity. Within the design of their online video spaces, museums must take this literature on uses and grafications of both old and new media into consideration. However, museum research is still scarce in this area, especially in the area of online video platforms, while many initiatives are currently taken up by museums. Therefore, this study aims to discern the peculiar motivations and perceptions of users of online museum video hostings.

Methodology

To investigate the communication strategies employed by museums on online video portals, a qualitative content analysis of three museums' video spaces was conducted. This includes an analysis of the museums' activity online, their level of control over the uploaded content, the way they react to users' feedback, and the features of their video space, and among others their use of Web 2.0 features. These case-studies were chosen because of their distinct usage of the portal, either by simply using a YouTube channel (*Metmuseum* [3] of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), by collaborating with YouTube (*YouTube Play* [4] of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York), or by making a custom video platform out of private means (*ARTtube* [5], initiated by the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the Netherlands). The different operational models of these portals allow for a comparative study between museums, while the incorporation of one Dutch museum portal enables a cross-cultural comparison with the two American museums, both situated in New York. Note that *ARTtube*, launched on 9 October 2009, is the Dutch equivalent of the larger and more popular *ArtBabble* [6], a collaborative project initiated by the Indianapolis Museum of Art, U.S.A. which launched on 7 April 2009 with six partner institutions, whose experiment was set as the example for *ARTtube*. As of autumn 2011, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen also cooperates with four other Dutch and Flemish museums. However, at the time this research was conducted, the museum was the sole operator of the video platform, which allows a comparison between three individual museum portals.

Moving over to the consumption-side of these video portals, the motivation of users and their perceptions of these spaces, a two-fold method was used. First, a qualitative content analysis of users' activity and perceptions of these video spaces through their comments, appraisals, and ratings was conducted. This concerns comments on 12 videos for each portal, chosing 6 top-rated and 6 top-viewed museum videos on YouTube and the 12 most commented videos on *ARTtube*, creating a data set of 36 videos in total. Thus, a selection was made among the most popular content, rather than a random sample. These comments were then scrutinized for patterns and compared to

categories taken from the literature, most notably looking for expressions of video's entertainment, education and socialization value.

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten users of our case-studies, who were interviewed over Skype. These ten online visitors were selected by sending out online surveys over the selected portals and their respective social media, and were randomly sampled out of the pool of respondents. The online survey was only administred for two weeks and collected data from 100 respondents. Because the survey data was too small, no significant findings could be made, though a general picture did emerge. Therefore, this data served to shape questions for the semi-structured interviews, allowing for more focused enquiries. This does not take away from the fact that the sample of ten interviewees is still too small to take definite lessons from, but the interviews did shine a light on more complex questions regarding users' attitudes, perceptions and experiences with art museums and their virtual video spaces. Interviewees were asked what features of online art videos attracted them, which videos they prefer and what they took away from watching these videos, at the same time leaving room for their personal interpretations and reflections on the subject.

Results and discussion

First, the strategies employed by museums on their online video portals are investigated by analyzing video and social activity, and the characteristics of these three portals. This leads to a general understanding of uses of video platforms from the perspective of museums and museum communication. In the second section, the gratification users get out of viewing art videos online are further investigated through interviews with users. Lastly, we try to grasp the motivations behind user's behavior as they explore the Web for videos of their interest; we conclude by arriving at three types of users on these spaces. This classification will be especially useful for museums that want to get (more) visibility on the Internet for their art videos.

Museum strategies for online video platforms
Both the Metropolitan Museum of Art (popularly called the Met) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum build their online web presence on the popular video hosting site YouTube. The main difference between the two museums lies in their web strategy. Whereas the Met simply took an account on a video channel on YouTube, the Guggenheim set up a joint video project in collaboration with YouTube, HP and Intel, their main purpose being to organize a biennial of creative (amateur) videos. Out of more than 23,000 videos submitted to the YouTube Play channel, 25 videos were selected by a jury and were highlighted in the museum and on the channel. In this undertaking, the Guggenheim played out a collaboration strategy with commercial parties as opposed to the broadcasting strategy of the Met. This is similar to Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen's strategy of adopting a more experimental approach by designing a custom online video space, *ARTtube*. The objective behind *ARTtube* is to provide videos about art and design, the museum and its collection which are made by professional filmmakers. Dutch museums like Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen are for a large part funded by the government, either local or national (or both). However, for the *ARTtube* project, the museum received a generous contribution from the VSBfund, which is a donation fund.

In their YouTube Play project, the Guggenheim focused on the desire of users to create and share their content with others, with YouTube being a popular platform for such endeavors. Bernstein (2008) explains this notion by describing a similar museum project: "(…) the more we thought about YouTube, the more we came to believe that

content created by the museum might not be as engaging as content created by others. Asking for visitor-created content seemed to be more in sync with the YouTube community." In the case of YouTube Play this indeed turned out to be a success, with over twenty-thousand creative videos from amateurs being sent to the channel. However, the number of total views lag behind the number of channel views, indicating that the project was more popular for its creativity and experiment than its actual content consumption.

While the Guggenheim only produced some videos concerning their project and the organization of the biennial, the Met was more concerned with producing videos about their art collection for educational purposes, which is in line with their mission statement: "The mission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art is to collect, preserve, study, exhibit, and stimulate appreciation for and advance knowledge of works of art that collectively represent the broadest spectrum of human achievement at the highest level of quality, all in the service of the public and in accordance with the highest professional standards" [7]. The museum thus adheres to its image of an authoritative and expert institution, while also wanting to expand their audience reach through the popular and entertaining video platform of YouTube. And indeed, the number of views indicates that a considerable number of online users are reached.

ARTtube takes in a different position here, not only because its art videos are both in English and Dutch, with mostly English subtitling when Dutch is spoken. First of all, the navigation of the site is somewhat dissimilar to YouTube: although there is an overview of the latest videos and different playlists just like on YouTube, *ARTtube* also features news specific to the platform and allows for jumping to the next scenes in the video as pre-given by the producers. In a sense, the platform allows the museum to display professional videos in a fine-tuned socio-technical context for optimal information transfer. To this end, there is one specific feature that clearly distinguishes the platform from YouTube, namely its option to download videos from the site. In the Web 2.0 era, this is regarded among digital literati as a basic requirement that YouTube does not meet (Ito, 2006). On the other hand, *ARTtube* misses social statistics as likes (although videos can be shared).

With regard to content, the videos uploaded on YouTube Play are primarily for entertainment reasons, the Met almost exclusively presents educational content (e.g. with 'talking heads' of experts), while *ARTtube* shows a mix of educational and informational content and entertaining audio-visual effects, i.e. displays videos for 'edutainment'. This has some clear consequences in terms of interactivity and participation, although it is deemed common to have few comments on these museum video spaces (Mancini & Carreras, 2010). As expected, online traffic is more considerable when their participation is directly requested, as in the case of YouTube Play. This namely answers to the five main features of today's participatory culture: 1) low entry barriers, 2) support for creativity, 3) informal mentorship, 4) evaluation of users' activity, and 5) community building (Jenkins, 2006). The desire to create user-generated content (UGC) mainly lies in "connecting with peers, achieving certain level of fame, notoriety or prestige, and self-expression" (OECD, 2007: 4).

However, just as the other two platforms in our sample, little dialogue could be found within the comment sections. Users do provide feedback, but museums do not actively engage in responsive dialogue on video platforms, limiting receiver control (McMillan, 2006). One exception is a special series on *ARTtube*, the 'Peanut-Butter Post'. This highly interactive section was initiated for the duration of an exhibition of the 'Peanutbutterfloor' (just as the name says) by Wim T. Schippers. Visitors could sit down for a webcam and ask any question concerning the art work which would later be answered by the artist. In this case, specific efforts were made to stimulate mutual

discourse on the video space, and also quite succesfully (during the exhibition, which lasted from March 5, 2011 to May 29, 2011, 675 questions were posed, and about 90% were answered at the time of the content analysis).

To sum up, the Guggenheim engaged in a commercial enterprise with YouTube Play, using a bottom-up approach while highlighting its authoritative position by composing a jury for its biennial. In contrast, the Metropolitan Museum of Art uses YouTube in a top-down strategy, taking control over the production of its videos. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen does the same with *ARTtube*, although its custom design allows for a more attractive and audience-centric context.

User engagment on museums' online video portals
From the interviews, some main features of museums' video hostings to attract visitors to these spaces could be extracted, namely the ease of access, entertaining and educative content, and the social platform it offers to users. These features can be connected to Bosshart and Macconi's model of pleasures (see Figure 1). Interviewees for example indicated that online museum videos induced them to pay a real visit to the museum, enjoying the "use of physical abilities" and eliciting a "pleasure of the senses" (Vorderer, 2001: 251). This is supported by several studies, such as in the explorative study by Bakshi and Throsby (2010).
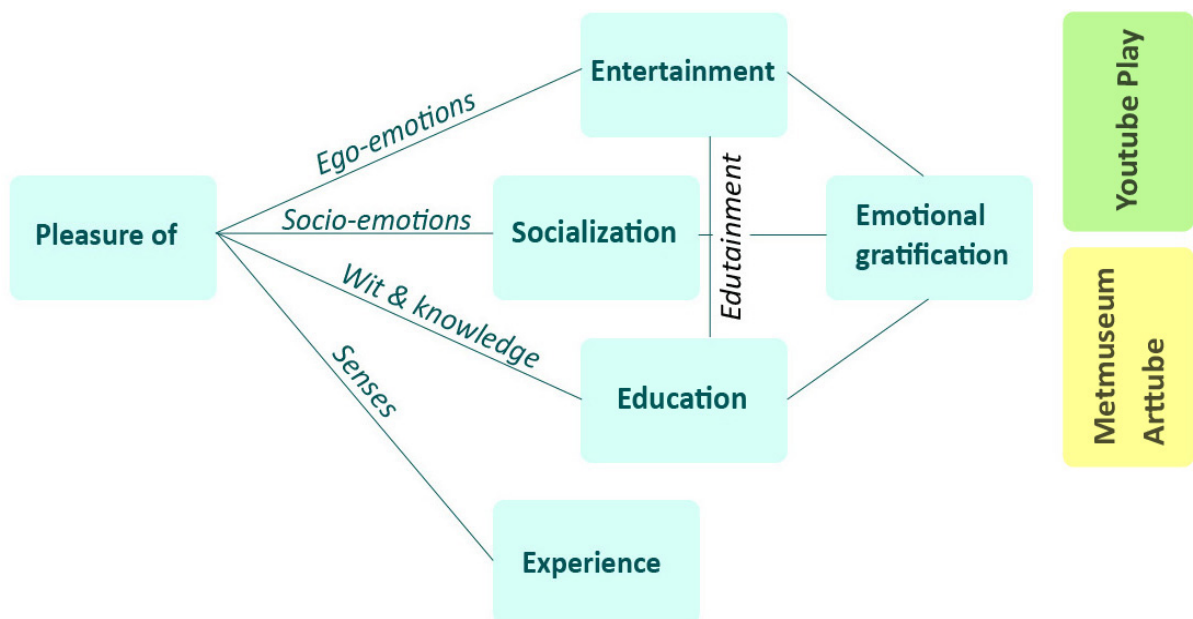

Figure 1. User gratifications from watching online museum videos

The interviewees most notably showed a desire to be entertained by museum videos, which is surprising considering the strong association of museums with learning. These important entertaining features of art videos connect well to Bosshart and Macconi's notion of the pleasure of (ego-)emotions and is characterized by Green *et al.* (2004) as an immersion into a narrative world. When looking at the motives given in the interviews, five types of entertaining motives can be distinguished. First, users derive *aesthetic pleasure* from viewing museum videos, indicating for example that videos are beautiful, stylish, well-designed and have amazing visual effects. One interviewee responded on the YouTube Play channel from the Guggenheim museum in the following way: "I've got a visual pleasure through watching some fo the users' videos,

they were produced in a very creative way." Visual characteristics of online museum videos thus have an important influence on users' affective perception of these spaces.

Secondly, there is the *immersive* component; people indicated that they lost their sense of time while watching museum videos, i.e. felt immersed into the activity. As one respondent formulated it: "What I mean by being entertained by the video… is when I am fully absorbed in it." A third motive was the *empathy* component; Users at times identified with the author or the main character of the video, for example in having the same ideas as him/her, or because of feeling connected with the author: "I watched that one-hour-video only because of Pogo, I was so excited and nervous about him" (about a participant of the YouTube Play Biennial). Fourthly, all interviewees indicated that they watched videos for the sake of *escaping reality*, for example boredom, seeking distraction from everyday activities, or to "explore something different from my life". Lastly, interviewees also mentioned a desire to *manage their mood* (cfr. Zillmann, 1988), to feel better or just to feel serene. One respondent even advised that: "(…) even serious videos, such as museum videos, should involve some humor (…) Humor makes it easy to watch, and it also raises your mood".

Although feeling mainly attracted to the entertaining content of museums' online videos, interviewees also recognized the educational function of these videos. They felt a desire to learn something new or to find more depth: "Of course I'm not watching these videos only because they are entertaining. I am interested in art and I want to know more about my favorite periods of art or special artists (…) I also feel self-confident when I know more about the art issues I am interested in." This provides them with a pleasure of personal wit and knowledge as found in other studies on cultural consumption online (Bryant & Vorderer, 2013). Moreover, some of the interviewees argued that they were more involved in the activity of watching museum videos online and remembered more information when videos were interesting and well-produced. Education thus works better when museum videos also have entertaining characteristics, or as Schweibenz (1998) argues, museum audiences seek both content and context and therefore museums should provide their visitors with 'edutainment' or opportunities for 'playful learning' (Resnick, 2004) in order to attract and engage them to a higher degree.

Basically, a key motivational factor for users is enhancing their socio-emotional state, i.e. the pleasure that users get from feeling affiliated to a community. Many studies have shown that visiting a museum is a largely social and group-based activity, which is engaged in collaboration with different subjects, such as family or friends. Spending leisure time on the Internet is no different, although it appears as a highly individual activity: relations are based here on virtual connections. Several motivations behind joining a virtual community can be mentioned, such as a desire to share information, to get social recognition for exchanging this information and to belong to a certain group. Interviewees in our sample for example indicated that they want to be viewed as an authority figure, and that they will only "write comments (…) when I'm sure somebody will read it. Otherwise there is no sense in it." Respondents describe this feeling of belonging to a community as a desire to communicate with people who share the same interests: "I also follow this art channel and participate in discussions, because I like most of the other participants there. Sometimes I share my point of view and it seems like other users care about what I am saying". Users thus seem to look for and place comments on those online museum platforms whose users will most likely share their interest in art. This opens up future avenues for research regarding the nuanced relationship between cultural capital, community and art consumption online.

User motivations for online art exploration

Having looked into the type of gratifications users seek when they engage with online museum videos and having distinguished the main characteristics of three museum video hostings with distinct strategies, we can progress by comparing both these consumption and production features in order to arrive at the peculiar motivations of users to visit and seek for content on these platforms.

Regarding the comments section, in YouTube Play, users mainly communicate their personal opinion about the video, the producer or its context, with few comments relating to art or museum issues. Many comments concern users' delight with the way the video is produced or the soundtrack is chosen and the modern visual effects that are used. In effect, users act as jury members on this platform, although their comments are mainly limited to providing positive feedback and wondering how the video was made and what is the story behind it. A significant difference was found in comparing the six top-viewed and six top-rated videos on this channel, as comments on top-viewed videos showed a lot of spam and 'trolling' and top-rated videos mainly provoked appreciative comments. This can be explained by the fact that top-viewed videos are displayed on the main page of the video site, hence are watched and commented by everybody who conciously or unconciously encounters the channel on YouTube. On the contrary, top-rated videos are placed 'deeper' into the site, and are thus found by those people that are interested in its content.

Due to the popular and highly commercial strategy of YouTube Play, which was clearly advertised on the YouTube main page, the channel pulled in a lot of online traffic which far exceeds that of the other two platforms and thus contains more comments. However, both the Met and *ARTtube* attracted a considerable (niche) community onto their video channels. The accessible YouTube channel of the Met provides a free and open space for discussions about art, which happens to a far higher degree than on the YouTube Play channel. Remarkably though, no spam was found on the channel of the Met, which may either indicate a high level of 'radical trust' in the online community (Russo et al., 2008), or strict moderation from museum staff. Furthermore, top-viewed videos on the Met channel showed more comments expressing personal opinions, whereas top-rated videos were more topical, specific, and served more as an exchange of information. Comments on the *ARTtube* channel are scarce, which may be explained by the fact that (at the time) the site requires registration for placing comments. This may have refrained users from spamming, but also from commenting. The videos that received the most comments predominantly show positive opinions about the video content and enthusiasm for its entertaining and educational content.

The differing nature of users' comments on the three video portals shows that different users seek different gratifications and are thus highly selective in their online viewing activity. Especially on YouTube Play many users weren't expecting to see art videos; comments show that they were annoyed and irritated by this discovery. Upon reading these comments, different types of users can be distinguished, which are either pleased or appalled by the educational content of museum video spaces, or are mainly attracted by its entertaining content (see Table 1).

Art-oriented users. These users are mainly interested in exploring art and their online activity is directed towards this end. They are usually looking for art videos on museum video portals and are mostly interested in its learning content, although they are also attracted by its entertaining features. In this sense, these users are highly extrinsically motivated because their activities are "instrumental to achieving a valued outcome" (Hoffman & Novak, 1996: 61), i.e. aimed at discovering new or in-depth information

about art. Their involvement is highly cognitive and their online attitude is mainly positive. Art-oriented users can be found on all platforms, although their participation on YouTube Play is less obvious than on the other two portals.

Table 1. Types of users on museums' video portals

Types of users	Discovery	Attitude	Interest in	Presence on		
				YouTube Play	*Met museum*	*ARTtube*
Art-oriented	Goal-directed	Positive	Interesting, educational content that contains knowledge	+	+	+
Entertainment-oriented	Navigation-al choice		Entertaining content, interactivity	+	-	+
Art-averse		Negative	Non art-related content	+	-	-

Entertainment-oriented users. This type of user pays a lot of attention to the entertaining features of museum videos, and are rarely looking for art-related videos directly. They are most likely to be overrepresented on museum video portals and mainly look for attractive visuals, opportunities to escape reality and to immerse themselves into the narrative of these videos. Because they accidentally come across art videos that they deem entertaining, the educational value is of less importance to them. They are intrinsically motivated, i.e. their viewing activity is performed for the sake of the experience of the activity, not for any apparent aim. These users browse the web for hedonic values such as enjoyment and their online behavior is highly experimental. If they like what they see, they will be more likely to come back. This may have positive outcomes for museums who want to increase their visitor numbers, also because this type of user is highly sensitive to commercial and bottom-up projects such as YouTube Play.

Art-averse users. This final type of users is mainly found on platforms such as the YouTube Play channel, leaving comments expressing their annoyance and dissatisfaction upon discovering art-related content during their online browsing activity ("Why YouTube decided I wanna know it??"). Just like entertainment-oriented users, they are highly intrinsically motivated with the difference that they like to be in control over the information they receive. They avoid spaces such as the Met channel and *ARTtube* altogether because they dislike their formal top-down approach. Although they are averse to art content, when videos are presented as displaying creativity they don't mind watching them. However, they are also highly critical of these videos and do not refrain from providing negative feedback. In this sense, they put on their YouTube glasses and approach these videos as typical of this site: "YouTube formula #1. Take a DULL boring video… introduce "rapid cut" editing and cheap animation…and end up with… a BORING video with RAPID CUT EDITING and CHEAP animation" (one commenter on a video on YouTube Play).

Conclusion

In this day and age of Web 2.0, museums have a high stake in attracting and engaging their audiences online and thereby, museum management would benefit from more

knowledge about the perceptions of users and outcomes of this type of digital commons. Considering the growing popularity of online video portals such as YouTube, this paper addresses the question of how museums can engage their users through online art video content. These digital spaces are seen as promising grounds for opening up the much gated art world and birthing new forms of public engagement. It is found that while art consumers online have individual differences in their gratifications and motivations, they do seek membership to virtual art communities and their consumption is affected by this collective participation. Even though these users consume art online, it is seen that they are first and foremost media users. Users bring with them well-schooled media practices, expectations and perceptions of digital spaces to these museum video domains. While contemporary museum video portals such as ArtTube, the Met Channel and YouTube Play are architected for democratic participation, the nuanced differences in their customized features give rise to diverse relations between these museum and their audiences. Other factors that influence user engagements within these novel art spheres are institutional funding and management strategies, commercial collaborations and institutional worldview on their role as experts and gatekeepers in this new media age.

Furthermore, this paper reveals three types of users with differing gratifications and motivations, namely, art-oriented, entertainment-oriented and art-averse users. So which type of users should museums attract on their online video platforms? Although entertainment-oriented users are by far the largest group encountered on these portals, museum management should make a choice between privilaging entertainment to meet the desires of this large group of users and their formal mission to serve art-oriented users who are looking for more in-depth knowledge of art. Platforms like *ARTtube* demonstrate that it can do both, provide 'edutainment' without being tainted by the commercial nature of YouTube and be recognized as a legitimate platform by a loyal art community. The balance between these two realms is an ongoing challenge as entertainment and education come with a long history of conflict in how we learn and engage as communities. Future research should explore the trade-offs that ensue in quality and expertise as popularization serves as an easier path to art markting in this difficult financial climate.

Notes

1. http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/
2. http://www.alexa.com/topsites/global
3. http://www.youtube.com/user/metmuseum
4. http://www.youtube.com/user/playbiennial
5. http://arttube.boijmans.nl/en/
6. http://artbabble.com/
7. http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/mission-statement

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