

What Role can Video Play in the Participatory Museum: Taking YouTube as Example

Yiheng Li^{1, a, *}

¹Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College, The Division of Culture and Creativity, Zhuhai, 519000, China

^aE-mail: n830031112@mail.uic.edu.cn

Abstract

With the boom of participatory culture, the public's interest in traditional museums has become increasingly depressed, resulting in a serious waste of museum resources. Therefore, museums must transform into participatory museums to improve the visitor participation and function as a carrier of social creativity. But to do that, museums need to merge with new media. As one of the most influential media, video is undoubtedly a good choice for museums. This paper aims to study the potential connection between video and participatory museums and analyzes YouTube as a case to find out what role video can play in participatory museums.

Keywords

Web 2.0; The participatory museum; Video; Museum 2.0.

1. Introduction

Web 2.0, is referring to Web 1.0, an Internet model before 2003. It embodied the Internet spirit, which stands for openness, equalization, collaboration, and sharing. With the advent of Web 2.0, user interaction has received more and more attention [1]. User-generated content (UGC) has played an essential part in user interaction due to its characteristics: massive and fragmentary, which is particularly obvious in social media, especially in video platforms. YouTube, for case, uses interactive mechanisms such as bookmarking, grading, and commenting to turn users who are barely viewers into participants in content production. While the viewers don't produce content directly, every view and comment they make helps YouTube optimize the contents and enable valuable videos to reach more users.

Under such a situation, participatory culture is flourishing, chiefly in the art and culture field. People tend to spend more time sharing, viewing, and even creating art on social media instead of going to the art organizations (museums, galleries) because they can participate in those activities, which is usually impossible for them in museums [2].

However, as a carrier of social creativity, the resources in the museum will be idle and wasted without certain participation. To avoid this phenomenon, museums need to transform themselves into the participatory museum to improve the public's activity in museums.

To do this requires a medium that can connect the museum to the public. At present, the most influential media is the video platform. YouTube, for example, has more than 2 billion monthly users, and 70% of viewers who see a brand on YouTube will buy that. So, it can be seen that the video platform impacts people's daily life significantly.

To fully explain what role video can play in participatory museums, this research plans to follow the theory proposed by Simon in The participatory Museum and taking videos from YouTube as examples.

2. Literature View

Drawing from current researches, no matter in China or other regions, few pieces of literature combine video with the museum. In China, most scholars tend to analyze the video platform itself and the development trend of video.

For example, Liu Shasha and Xu Fei focused on studying Weibo in their article *Research on the Current Status and Development Strategies of Social Creative Videos in Weibo*. In this paper, they analyze the characteristic of Weibo from the perspectives of multi-polarization circulation, and the long tail effect, which is the spread range and influence of videos can be expanded through the interaction between users [3]. And how this feature affects creative videos: content homogenization and excessive commercial orientation, to put forward how to improve the media environment in Weibo to promote the spread of creative videos. In *The Creating and Reflection of Popular Short Videos Under MCN Mode*, Starting from short videos, Chen Miao introduced the development of the MCN organization in China in detail. And compared with UGC, the MCN organization produces more professional content through building personal IP, user-oriented thinking, and operation following video platforms conditions. At the same time, she also analyzes the difficulties existing in this mode, such as the Matthew effect enhances and the impact of market logic on content creation. In addition, propose some suggestions for these situations [4].

Although there are works of literature linking video with the museum, they only focus on optimizing the video content, like what Liang Yanfang researches in *Discussion on Optimization of the Short Video and Live Broadcast Content of Museum in Mediascape*. Based on the communication theory, this literature firstly analyzes the specialties and differences between live broadcasts and short videos. The content of short videos features fragmentation and socialization, and due to their short time, the information quantity will be weakened. Live broadcasts are characterized by immediate feedback and rich content. Based on this information, the author suggests different content strategies for improving the video content. Although this writing does combine the museum and new media, it is more about how the video contents released on various platforms by the museum should adjust measures to local conditions [5].

In comparison to China, modern museums in western countries were established earlier and, their development status and systems are more mature than those in China. Therefore, western scholars have more studies on museum transformation. According to *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon associates the concept of Web 2.0 with museums to come up with her vision of what museums will become: the participatory museum. She explains the participatory culture and states the principles of participating in museums and the reasons for building participatory museums through case studies of activities held by different art organizations. Because there is so much content in the book, the research will not repeat it here. Nina's work provides a theoretical basis and development direction for the museum transformation [2]. However, she only focuses on the changes carried out within museums while ignoring the influence brought by external factors, such as social media. Jenny Kidd gives a new definition to the museum in *Museums in the New Mediascape: Transmedia, Participation, and Ethics*, in which she sees the museum after 2014 as a definitional, philosophical, ethical, aspirational, and economic dilemmas mix. In the rest of the book, she studies how museums changed with the prosperity of social media and concludes that museums should be compound in the new mediascape, which means people can create and recreate the cultural outcomes they have seen [1]. Sad to say, because the narrative angle of the book is too large, Jenny only describes the museums in the new mediascape from a general view, so there is little detail about how new media can help museums transform themselves into a new pattern.

Learning from the above kinds of literature, the researcher proposes the topic: what role can video play in the participatory museum, to study how to use social media to achieve museum transformation.

3. The Role of Video in the Participatory Museum

According to Nina's theory, the participatory museum has three main qualities: 1. Be interactive; 2. Be able to socialize; 3. Put audiences first. In the following part, the researcher will start from these three aspects and take YouTube as an example to explain what role video can play in the participatory museum.

3.1. Be Interactive

The participatory museum is derived from the participatory culture offered by Henry Jenkins. Henry advocates that the public should participate in culture creation, sharing, and dissemination through media rather than being passive consumers. Therefore, it can be said simply that the participatory museum focuses on the interaction between its content and audiences. What's more, this interaction is not just happened within the museum physically.

As a video platform, YouTube itself is a kind of social media, and its functions include sharing and communicating. With the emergence of We Media, people's desire to share has become stronger. Thus, the vlog industry thrives. To a participatory museum, it should encourage people to post vlog videos after visiting. On the one part, the contents of the museum have an impact on audiences. On the other part, these videos will also attract more interest in the museum. After other people see these videos, they may become interested in the museum and go there. Pinto Art Museum 2021: New Wing Tour + Food Review made by blogger Daniel Alleje is a good example of this positive interaction.

In addition to actively posting videos, the participatory museum should also allow viewers to comment on its official videos and choose their favorite exhibitions as the top videos for a while. Based on Jakob Nielsen's "90-9-1" principle, in most online communities, 90 percent of users are non-activity, while only 1 percent of them create the content. Because the production of vlog videos is open-ended self-expression, it requires the audience to have certain creativity to participate in it [6]. So let the audience vote is much more interactive than letting the audience generate content.

In such an interaction, the video serves as a bridge between the museum and the audience. Although it happens outside the museum on the Internet, the results it made eventually come back to the museum – the visitors' activity in the museum increased.

3.2. Be Able to Socialize

The social experience had in the participatory museum is a process from Me to We. Audiences find their favorite exhibits in the exhibitions and then learn more about those. After that, the audience will wonder to figure out what other people like, and during this, they can find people with similar tastes. When such a group of people comes together, new content is generated by sharing. The whole process is called the network effect, which translates individual behavior into the benefit for group.

To support the social experience, the museum needs social objects. The social object refers to the object that creates relationships between the people who make it, who uses it, who comments it, and who consumes it. The video released by the museum can be seen as a perfect social object, figuring as an intermediary to connect people around them. Take the British Museum's YouTube video Spot the Difference between Hokusai's Great Waves (all 111 of them) as a sample.

First of all, the content of this video is to introduce Hokusai's Great Waves, which utilizes resources in the museum, considered as the producer. When people start to look at these videos, each time they watch will raise the number of views, and each increase in views will push the video to more people [7]; And some people will collect the video in their favorites or forward it to their friends after viewing it, so they belong to the disseminator. In addition to passively watching the video, some viewers will comment on the video and cause a small range of discussion, acting as the reviewer. The British Museum's YouTube videos create a virtual place where creators, sharers, and reviewers are linked together as an extension of the museum's content to the Internet.

Using videos as social objects not only meets the social needs required by the participatory museum but also breaks through the limitation of time and space to digitize social activities, making them more convenient for audiences.

3.3. Put Audiences First

Stephen Well once said that the highest purpose of museums is to improve the quality of people's lives, which means that museums, like shopping malls, should give priority to the audience. In other words, participatory museums are personalized.

One of the reasons why traditional museums do not have a high level of participation is that they neglect to cooperate with the audience. The audience is the museum's most crucial partner, and the exhibition will not be complete until the last partner steps through the door [2]. However, traditional museums often do not accept audiences' opinions and creative ideas because they are professional enough, at least in their cases. The participatory museum needs to make changes to let visitors know the connection between the museum and their lives and the significance of visiting museums, which should develop from their interests and needs.

To achieve this, museums need to build a system of recommendation. Such a system often appears in the video field. No matter the recommended content on Tok or the videos shown on the home page on YouTube, it is the system that extracts keywords from the previous video contents you have viewed and then makes targeted recommendations for you.

The recommendation system for the participatory museum is more complicated because it involves pulling content from audiences and emphasizes the audiences' activity in gathering information for themselves. The participatory museum put new things in front of the audience to enable them to express what they like clearly, thus guiding them to continue exploring instead of giving the audience what they want.

As the second most visited website, the amount of data YouTube gathers every day is enormous. Through those data, the museum could define what kinds of videos are most viewed. And the videos can be used by the museum to extract the keywords, then the museum could make new content through those keywords. By uploading videos with those contents to test whether the audience would be interested in such information, it can decide whether to hold exhibitions on relevant topics. Compared with the decision made by the management in the past, this approach will undoubtedly put the audience's opinions first. Moreover, collecting data through videos will be much more interesting than questionnaires and will not disturb the audience's life.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, video plays a significant role in the participatory museum. Video is not only a database for museums to use to make decisions, but it also links the public and museums. In the new mediascape, the combination of museums and new media has become an inevitable trend. As a tool, video can maximize the advantages that the participatory museum has. Moreover, it also can help ordinary museums to transform into participatory museums. However, there are still some drawbacks, such as balancing the audience's favorite content with the museum's

aesthetic education. However, there is no doubt that participatory museums are the best choice for museum transformation at present.

References

- [1] Kidd, J. (2014). *Museums in the new mediascape*. Ashgate. Farnham.
- [2] Simon, N. (2010). *The participatory museum*. Museum 2.0. Santa Cruz.
- [3] Shasha, L., & Fei, F. (2018). Research on the Current Status and Development Strategies of Social Creative Videos in Weibo. *Communication Forum*, 1:4-5.
- [4] Miao, C. (2020). The Creating and Reflection of Popular Short Videos Under MCN Mode. *Audio-visual (08)*, 160-161.
- [5] Yanping, L (2021). Optimization of the Short Video and Live Broadcast Content of Museum in Mediascape. *Identification and Appreciation of Cultural Relics*, 110-112.
- [6] Runnel, P., & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. (2014). *Democratising the museum: Reflections on participatory technologies*. Peter Lang. Lausanne
- [7] Suzić, B., Karlíček, M., & Stríteský, V. (2016). Adoption of Social Media for Public Relations by Museums. *Central European Business Review*, 5: 5–16.