

Participation and engagement in social networks as a digital communication strategy for museums and art collections: the Dalí case

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Introduction and Context: from 20th Century Surrealism to 21st Century Social Networking

Museums are also using these communication platforms, approaching the idea of "social museum" or "museum 2.0" (Losada and Capriotti, 2015). Studies on museums and social networks have grown a lot in the last decade. Thus, from an epistemological point of view, the present research is located between the Information and Communication Sciences, especially Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing, and the Humanities, especially Art History, more specifically Museology and Museography, but also many others.

Contemporary art and social communication have always been linked by strong ties and this has been confirmed in several academic works (Jiménez-Marín, 2009; Cabezuelo-Lorenzo, 2013:124). All museums already use web 2.0 tools (Fernández-Hernández, Vacas Guerrero and García-Muiña, 2021:102). Today there are "new content dynamics in museums and galleries" (Quintana-Gómez, 2024:539).

In this sense, it focuses on the analysis of the use of social networks, with special attention to platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, in the field of museums and art collections, taking as a case of analysis two museums dedicated to the figure of Salvador Dalí, born in the city of Figueras/Figueres (Gerona/Girona) in 1904 and died in the same city in 1989.

This paper analyzes the presence of two Dalinian museums on the Web. The Internet continues to help the creation and dissemination of contemporary art thanks to different profiles in *social media* (González-Torres, 2018:101), especially in the case of Dalí (Elías-Zambrano and Cabezuelo-Lorenzo, 2024:187).

Dalí was undoubtedly one of the best known artists during his lifetime, both inside and outside Spain. Dalí developed a prolific artistic career that spanned from his early years in Figueras, in the Empordà region, to his international consecration. Recognition came from different spheres, from the Spanish, American and French press to King Juan Carlos I himself, who awarded him the title of Marquis of Dalí de Púbol.

Beyond his social, political or institutional recognition, from a purely artistic perspective he was an outstanding painter, sculptor, engraver, set designer and writer, as he also liked to consider himself. His work and relationship with the audiovisual media has already been much studied, especially with the cinema, in collaboration with Gala, too, which makes the two of them a "surrealist cinema couple" (Cabezuelo-Lorenzo and López-Martín, 2023:229).

However, Dalí also had great critics and detractors. Throughout his career, Dalí cultivated an eccentric and provocative personality that generated both admiration and criticism. His tendency towards narcissism and megalomania was interpreted by some as a strategy to capture public attention, while others considered these attitudes an obstacle to fully appreciate his artistic production. He himself attributed his fascination with all things excessive, luxurious and hedonistic to an alleged Arab lineage dating back to the time of Muslim domination in the Iberian Peninsula.

Recognized as one of the greatest exponents of surrealism, his work and personality profoundly marked the artistic panorama of the 20th century and his influence is still present. Several museums around the world continue to make his figure known, the most important being the Teatro Museo de Figueras (Spain) and the Dalí Museum in Florida (United States).

Salvador Dalí distinguished himself by the creation of striking and dreamlike images that characterize surrealism and that have left such a mark on later artists and public opinion in general. Some of these examples are his most emblematic and popular works, including *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), popularly known as *The Soft Watches*, which has become an icon of surrealism.

Salvador Dalí's pictorial technique is characterized by great precision and detail and reflects a deep admiration for the masters of the Renaissance and Renaissance art in general. This is manifested in his mastery of drawing and in the technical quality of his compositions.

Although his main means of expression was painting, Dalí also made very successful incursions into other artistic disciplines such as cinema, sculpture and

photography, collaborating with leading figures in the audiovisual field. This creative eclecticism allowed him to develop a unique and recognizable style, which synthesized diverse influences and transformed them into a visual language of his own.

With the outbreak of World War II in Europe, Dalí moved to the United States with Gala, where he achieved great commercial success and expanded his artistic activity into fields such as film and set design. In the following decades he returned to Europe and settled mainly in Portlligat (Catalonia), where he continued to produce significant works. In the 1970s he founded and inaugurated the Dalí Theater-Museum in Figueres, a space dedicated to preserving and exhibiting his artistic legacy.

Salvador Dalí's life and work represent a synthesis of tradition and innovation, impeccable technique and boundless imagination. His ability to constantly reinvent his artistic language made him a central figure of 20th century art and an enduring symbol of surrealism. Dalí continues to arouse passions today and this is evidenced in social networks (Corral, 2019).

In the world there are several spaces, collections and museums dedicated to the life and work of Salvador Dalí, each with unique characteristics that reflect different aspects of the artist's legacy. The Salvador Dalí House-Museum (Portlligat) and the Gala-Dalí Castle (Púbol) stand out. The Portlligat house-museum is located in a former fisherman's house in Cadaqués. This residence-workshop was the artist's home for much of his life. Its labyrinthine design and natural surroundings evoke Dalí's dreamlike universe. The Gala-Dalí Castle (Púbol) is a small fortress in the style of a medieval castle that Dalí gave to Gala, his muse. This intimate space combines art and architecture in a personal tribute to Gala herself.

But, undoubtedly, the two most outstanding are the museums of Figueras in Catalonia and Saint Petersburg in Florida. The Dalí Theater-Museum in Figueras is the most representative museum and the "largest surrealist object in the world", designed by Dalí himself. It houses more than 1,500 works, including paintings, sculptures and unique assemblages, and is part of the Catalan Dalinian triangle along with Portlligat and Púbol.

For its part, the Salvador Dalí Museum in Florida, in the United States, has the largest collection of Dalí's works outside Europe, including some of his masterpieces. There is also some other space worthy of note, such as the Salvador Dalí Museum-Gallery Xpo in the city of Bruges, in Flanders (Belgium), which offers a permanent exhibition of paintings, sculptures and graphics in a

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For its part, the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida (United States), houses the largest collection of works by Salvador Dali outside Europe. Inaugurated in 1982 and redesigned in 2011 by architect Yann Weymouth. It is a building that combines contemporary functionality with some touches of surrealism, with a hurricane-proof concrete structure and an iconic glass skylight known as the name "Enigma". This design reflects the innovative spirit of the Catalan artist while the building is prepared for Florida's adverse weather conditions.

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The museum has three floors, including a theater for screenings and lectures, the Gala Café with Spanish tapas, a library and rooms and galleries, which exhibit both permanent works and temporary exhibitions. Its waterfront location on Tampa Bay offers spectacular views, making it a tourist attraction for the area. This U.S. Dalí space not only preserves the artist's legacy in North America, but

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has also established itself as a cultural reference in Florida, attracting thousands of visitors annually.

Finally, it should also be noted that there are other museums dedicated to Dalí, but they are not covered in this work. This is the case, for example, of the smallest museum dedicated to Salvador Dalí in the world, which is the *Espace Dalí* in Montmartre, Paris (France). This space, although smaller compared to other Dalí museums, offers an intimate and focused experience of the artist's work. It exhibits a collection of sculptures, prints and graphic works that highlight Dalí's signature surrealism. Its location in the iconic art district of Montmartre makes it a special destination for admirers of the painter, offering a concentrated glimpse into his creativity and legacy, but his social networks have not been analyzed in this work.

Museums facing the digital challenge of social networks

This paper adopts a methodology based on case analysis, selecting two museum institutions dedicated to the figure of Salvador Dalí as the object of study. For this purpose, four profiles on social networks are examined considering three fundamental variables: the interactions generated, the content published and the audience reached. Thus, this research aims to highlight the strategic importance of social networks as key tools to encourage more active participation, involvement and *engagement* on the part of audiences (Viñarás-Abad and Cabezuelo-Lorenzo, 2012:87).

In this sense, the digital profiles that museums use to make themselves known not only allow them to expand their communicative reach, but also contribute significantly to building public loyalty and strengthening their digital reputation. In this line, the focus of this paper aligns with previous studies that highlight how social networks have transformed museums into more open and dialogic spaces, capable of overcoming physical barriers and attracting diverse audiences through innovative strategies, which was evident in the months of confinement during the Covid-19 pandemic (González-Vallés et al, 2021:203).

In this paper, we start from the idea that social networks are not only platforms for the dissemination of events or exhibitions, but also means to establish a direct dialogue with virtual communities. This is especially relevant in a context where users expect dynamic and accessible content. For example, practices such as the publication of interactive stories or live broadcasts have proven to be highly effective in generating interest and increasing interaction with audiences. Likewise, these platforms allow museums to adapt their communication strategies towards a more inclusive and collaborative model, promoting an

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enriching cultural experience both inside and outside the museum's physical space.

This paper aims to confirm that an active and creative management of social networks is essential for museums to consolidate their digital presence, attract new audiences and foster a closer relationship with their visitors. This not only reinforces their role as cultural agents, but also positions them as leaders in the field of digital communication within the cultural sector.

In this sense, we try to answer several questions: What specific strategies do museums use to increase their participation in social networks?

How does the use of social media compare between Spanish and U.S. museums? What impact does social media presence have on the digital reputation of museums? What additional variables might be relevant to analyze the use of social media in museums? How does social media influence audience participation and engagement in museums and art collections?

This chapter will attempt to answer these questions and many more, from a plural perspective and with respect for all points of view, or at least to open the debate. To do so, we start from a theoretical framework and from authors and researchers who have already made their previous contributions to the subject. Thus, this work starts from a very clear hypothesis that considers that museums need to have profiles on social networks because these platforms have become essential channels for cultural dissemination, communication with the public and attracting visitors.

Social networks give greater visibility and global reach to the art world as *social media* allow museums to transcend their physical boundaries and reach audiences around the world. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter facilitate the promotion of exhibitions, events and collections to audiences that otherwise would not have access to the institution.

In the same way, social media increase participation and interaction with audiences, since thanks to the network's museums can generate a dialogue with their followers through comments, surveys and live broadcasts. This interaction strengthens the bond between the institution and its audience, encouraging more active participation in cultural life.

In this line, it must be said that educational outreach and accessibility of museums is growing thanks to social networks because they allow sharing educational content, as well as explanations of works of art, interviews with

curators and virtual tours. This democratizes access to culture and makes the museum a more inclusive space.

It is also worth noting that beyond the use of networks for the promotion of events and exhibitions, networks are always there. Through strategic publications, museums often inform about new exhibitions, conferences and activities, increasing in-person and digital attendance at their events, but they are not a one-time tool. They are always there, at all times, for data analysis and communication strategies, thanks to tools such as *Facebook Insights* and *Instagram Analytics*, which allow museums to better understand their audience and adjust their communication strategies to optimize their impact. Thus, the presence in social networks is essential for museums to expand their influence, encourage public participation and adapt to the new dynamics of cultural consumption in the digital age.

This paper uses the social networks Facebook and Instagram for the analysis. Facebook is still today a strategic tool for the dissemination of museums and art collections. In fact, for years Facebook has become a key platform for the promotion of museums and art collections, allowing these institutions to expand their reach and connect with global audiences. Thanks to its ability to share visual content, events and interactive publications, Facebook offers an effective way to publicize exhibitions, artworks and cultural activities.

In the same way, this network created by Mark Zuckerberg has established itself as an essential strategic tool for the promotion and dissemination of museums and art collections in the digital sphere. Its ability to reach global audiences and facilitate direct interaction with the public has transformed the communication strategies of these cultural institutions.

Facebook allows museums not only to share information about their collections and events, but also to encourage more active participation from users through comments, shares and reactions. This interaction not only broadens the reach of publications, but also strengthens the relationship between the museum and its audience, creating a community around the institution.

In addition, the Facebook platform offers analytical tools that allow museums to evaluate the effectiveness of their communication strategies. By analyzing metrics such as post reach, user engagement and audience demographics, institutions can adjust and optimize their content to maximize its impact. Today, while many museums have adopted Facebook as a communication channel, there is variability in the level of interaction and engagement they encourage.

Some focus on the one-way dissemination of information, while others actively seek audience participation, promoting a more dynamic and enriching dialogue.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that, despite being a network with many years of life, Facebook remains a fundamental platform for museums and art collections to expand their visibility and strengthen their connection with the public. By taking advantage of the social network's functionalities and encouraging participation, museums can enrich the cultural and educational experience of their audiences, adapting to contemporary communicative dynamics. In addition, it is worth noting that one of the main benefits of Facebook is its segmentation potential. Through advertising tools and customized algorithms, thanks to Facebook, museums can target their publications to specific audiences based on interests, location and digital behavior. This allows them to attract both local visitors and tourists interested in art and culture who continue to use Facebook as a reference network.

In addition, the platform encourages public participation through comments, reactions and sharing. This interaction generates a sense of community and belonging, encouraging dialogue between the institution and its followers. It also facilitates the dissemination of content organically, as publications can go viral when users share them on their own networks.

Facebook Live and videos in general have proven to be valuable tools to offer virtual tours, interviews with artists and exclusive presentations. This allows museums to expand their accessibility, reaching people who cannot physically visit exhibitions.

On the other hand, *Facebook Insights* provides data on the impact of publications, helping museums to adjust their communication strategies and improve their content. Facebook is an essential strategic tool for museums and art collections, as it not only increases their visibility, but also encourages public participation and engagement, ensuring a closer connection between culture and society.

In addition to Facebook, the other major social network used by museums is Instagram, which is also widely used as a strategic tool for the dissemination of the contents of museums and art collections in Spain and around the world. In fact, Instagram has become an essential platform for the promotion of museums and art collections, thanks to its visual approach and its ability to connect with global audiences. Its format based on images and videos allows these institutions to showcase their exhibitions in an attractive way, generating an immediate impact on users.

One of the main benefits of Instagram is its *engagement* capacity. Platforms like Instagram favor direct interaction between museums and their followers through comments, "likes" and story sharing. This allows museums to create a digital community that strengthens their relationship with the public and increases their reach.

Tools such as *Instagram Stories*, *Reels* and live broadcasts provide innovative opportunities for cultural outreach. Museums can conduct virtual tours, artist interviews and exclusive presentations, bringing their collections to people who cannot physically visit them. In addition, interactive features such as polls and questions encourage public participation, generating an active dialogue about art and heritage. It is also worth saying that Instagram has a high educational potential (Alves-López, 2017:37) and can be a good didactic proposal at times (Molina-Fajardo, 2022). It is also very useful in communication matters linked to creativity and art (Villena-Alarcón and Pérez-Ordóñez, 2020:3237), but actually about any field of fashion and advertising as well (Jiménez-Marín and Elías-Zambrano, 2019:25).

Another key aspect of Instagram is the use of *hashtags* and collaboration with cultural *influencers*, which allows the museum to expand its visibility and attract new audiences. By analyzing metrics provided by Instagram *Insights*, museums can adjust their content strategies to improve their impact. In this way, it can be safely stated that Instagram is a key strategic tool for museums and art collections, as it not only amplifies their digital presence, but also fosters audience interaction and engagement. Its visual and interactive nature makes it an ideal medium for cultural outreach in the digital age. Instagram is almost a gallery of art and literature (Olalla-Ramírez and Mula-Falcón, 2023). In addition, Instagram is also being widely used as a tool for scientific dissemination (Sidorenko-Bautista, Cabezuelo-Lorenzo and Herranz-de-la-Casa, 2021:143).

Case analysis: engagement and competition on Facebook and Instagram of the Dalí Museums

To study participation and *engagement*, four social media profiles are analyzed taking into account three variables: interactions, publications and audience. The term *engagement* in social networks refers to the level of commitment, interaction and emotional connection that users establish with a brand, product or community on digital platforms. The methodology of analysis of information processes is applied according to the proposal of Quintana-Gómez (2021:41).

This concept, key in digital marketing, measures the quality of the relationship between an account and its followers through metrics such as "likes", comments,

shares, mentions or *clicks* on posts. *Engagement* involves not only superficial interactions, but also a deeper bond that fosters loyalty and genuine interest on the part of the audience. This engagement can manifest itself at various levels: from simple recognition of a publication to more active participation in conversations, surveys or dynamics proposed by a museum.

Table 1. Profiles analyzed on Facebook and Instagram.

Museum	Facebook	Instagram
Figueras	https://www.facebook.com/MuseusDali?locale=es_ES	https://www.instagram.com/museudali/
Florida	https://www.facebook.com/thedalimuseum?locale=es_ES	https://www.instagram.com/dalimuseum/

In order to carry out this work, the difference and/or evolution of these two profiles was analyzed over two years. The dates chosen are divided into two phases or stages. The first band goes from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024 and is compared with the period from December 31, 2022 to December 31, 2023. The Social Media Competency Report has been used.

Figure 1. Data on interactions, publications and audiences of the two museums on Facebook. Source: We Social Media Competence Report (2023-2024).



On the analysis of the data of the report on the competition in social networks of the two Dalí museums compared, it is worth highlighting some facts and figures. First of all, it is necessary to talk about the general trends of the sector. It is necessary to highlight interactions with an overall figure of 87.5K (-6.32% compared to the previous year), which indicates a slight decrease in *engagement*.

A total of 305 publications were published (+64.86%), showing a considerable increase in activity. In this sense, regarding the audience, it is maintained. There is an audience of 434K, which can be considered stable. This picture suggests

that, although there is an effort to generate more content, interactions have slightly decreased. It may indicate the need to improve the quality of the content or adjust the strategy to optimize audience engagement.

Figure 2. Data on interactions, posts and audiences of the two museums on Instagram. Source: We Social Media Competence Report (2023-2024).



Regarding the performance on Facebook, there are 236K interactions (+47.99%), which reflects a significant growth. On the publications, there are 336 (+63.9%), with more shared content. Finally, on data by audience there are 147K. In terms of specific museums by the Dalí Museum (United States), there are 135K interactions (+7.07%), with an audience of 91.1K. In terms of the Dalí Museum Theater (Spain), there are 101K interactions (+204.51%), with a remarkable growth in interactions. Thus, the Catalan museum increased by 371.11% its publications, suggesting a more aggressive content strategy. The increase in publications and audience suggests that the content has been more frequent and effective in capturing the attention of the public. Regarding the other social network, Instagram, it is worth mentioning that the Dali Museum in the United States had 81.4K interactions (-9.02%), with an audience of 404K. This same museum in Florida counted 6,092 interactions (+55.41%), with an audience of 30.2K. Despite the growth in publications (+546.67% in Museu Dalí), interactions in The Dalí Museum have dropped. This could indicate that the increase in publications has not generated the same level of *engagement*.

Conclusions

This study has examined the role of social networks in the communication and dissemination of museums and art collections, with a particular focus on the Facebook and Instagram platforms of the Dalí Theatre Museum of Figueras in Spain and the Dalí Museum of Florida in the United States. For this purpose, a methodological approach based on case analysis was employed, selecting as the object of study two museums dedicated to the figure of the renowned Catalan artist Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) that have profiles on Facebook and

Instagram. The 2 profiles of the two entities in these two social networks have been analyzed. The research has focused on the detailed examination of these four institutional profiles on social networks, considering three fundamental variables: the level of interactions generated, the frequency and characteristics of the publications, as well as the composition and behavior of the audience. Through this analysis, we seek to understand the impact of the digital presence of museums in the construction of their institutional identity and in strengthening their relationship with the public.

In conclusion, it can be said that Facebook has been the channel with the highest growth in *engagement*, with significant increases in interactions and audience, while Instagram shows signs of saturation, with a high volume of publications, but a drop in *engagement* in the American case of The Dalí Museum. For its part, the Teatro Museo de Figueras has good considerations on Facebook. It has improved considerably on this network, which suggests an effective content strategy. Finally, it is worth making some recommendations. In this regard it can be said that the strategy going forward can focus on creating more attractive and dynamic content for Instagram such as more *Reels* and some more interactive *Stories*. Evaluate whether the increase in posts is negatively affecting the quality of *engagement*. Similarly, another recommendation could be to optimize strategies on Facebook, where growth has been more solid. The results obtained allow us to affirm that social media profiles play a strategic role in promoting participation, active involvement and *engagement* of audiences. In this sense, digital platforms not only act as channels for the dissemination of artistic and cultural content, but also contribute to the consolidation of communities around museums and their collections, as demonstrated by the Dalí case.

In conclusion, this study on the Dalí museums in Spain and the United States shows that the effective management of social networks is a key element in the communication strategy of museums, as it favors the loyalty of audiences and enhances the digital reputation of these institutions. Therefore, recommends that museums develop structured digital strategies based on data analysis in order to optimize their reach, improve their positioning and strengthen their relationship with their audiences in the virtual environment.

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