STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES FOR MUSEUMS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
	When information and communication technologies (ICT) have been consolidated as platforms for connecting with audiences, it is necessary to understand the strategic nature of communication to achieve institutional objectives. With in-depth interviews with communication experts, as well as an analysis of the profiles of the professionals who lead museum communications, it is detected that this is not centralized in a department, thus reducing its strategic significance. Furthermore, these still lack a directive and decisive nature, which prevents aligned and cohesive communication.

1. Introduction

On 24 August, the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was held to address crucial questions concerning the concept and definition of the museum. The new definition proposed, with 92.41% of the votes in favour, was as follows

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution at the service of society that explores, collects, preserves, interprets and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums promote diversity and sustainability. Engaging communities, museums operate and communicate ethically and professionally, offering diverse experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing (ICOM, 2022).

This definition already includes very important aspects that transcend and go beyond the traditional concept of heritage research, conservation and exhibition, such as inclusion, community integration and participation, ethical and professional communication, and sustainability.

Museums are integrated entities in cities, where relations with the different types of audiences must serve to strengthen the image of the museum. This type of relationship, like any other organisation, must be based on transparency, proximity and the promotion of dialogue in order to strengthen the museum as a cultural manager of enormous value to society. However, this impulse must be led by expert professionals, dircom (director of communication), who know how to create and manage a strategic axis around the museum's essential values and services (Machado, 2015).

According to Cordón-Benito et al. (2022), museums are a type of organisation open to the public for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment. However, by definition, they also have a social function. This function is manifested in the relationships of dialogue that they establish with the different communities in which they are installed. In this way, museums become community builders in an increasingly globalised and multicultural environment. Museum institutions establish close relationships with the communities in which they are located, invite them to become part of the museum, develop activities with them and become spaces for multicultural encounters. Like any other organisation, museums are obliged to interact with a multitude of organisations of different kinds within the society of which they are part and with the rest of the world, using all kinds of tools to do so (Ferguson, 2018). Indeed, the relationship between the institutional communication of museums and the cultural human rights of different groups in society is clear (Ortega, 23), constituting community-building entities in society (Salmerón et al., 2023; Coccia and Di Bella, 2024; Paleo et al., 2024).

For this reason, museums have come to understand the importance of virtual communities and the accessibility of their buildings, even when the visitor is geographically distant from them. In a tentative way, some have opted for gamification strategies to bring their works closer to digital groups who have never visited the building or who need to show a modern, digital space that is close to the new generations.

This understanding and use has been transferred to the general public, driven by the pandemic situation suffered in 2020, which forced museums to structure their communication around the virtual space, leaving this space and coexisting with the traditional face-to-face model (Fernández Fernández et al., 2021; De las Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2023).

For Mut and Rueda (2022), it is worth mentioning two business risks that companies are very aware of since the COVID pandemic: disinformation and cybersecurity. The digital ecosystem in which most organisations are immersed contributes to the spread of fake news, which undermines honesty and truthfulness and affects the quality of their content (Mut Camacho, 2020).

The rise of reputational risks fuelled by hyper-connectivity and fake news was discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos (2020a), where the need to analyse the reputational risk of misinformation was presented as an imperative. Cyber-attacks have become a common threat to individuals and organisations. Surveys rank them as the seventh most likely and eighth most impactful risk, and the second most worrying risk to doing business globally over the next 10 years (World Economic Forum, 2020b, p. 60).

On the other hand, art and culture constitute a solid pillar that contributes to the achievement of an organisation's objectives, integrating issues such as social and public responsibility. In the case of museums, the integration of sustainability policies and their communication would be more than justified (Herranz de la Casa et al. ,2015).

Nowadays, museums are one of the main attractions within the cultural offer of a place. They are spaces that offer a fixed offer (permanent collections) and also vary their offer, adapting to new demands through temporary exhibitions. In addition, museums have become centres of dissemination for different audiences: workshops, conferences, guided tours, etc., which, together with other initiatives - learned from marketing - such as extending opening hours, shops, online ticket sales, renting out spaces for events, have made museums a participatory and proactive actor in the cultural life of the community, and not just for tourists (Viñarás Abad et al., 2010). Given this panorama, the management of communication by the museum requires that it is in the hands of a qualified professional and that the museum has a specific communication department. We are therefore dealing with responsible communication, which is made up of a series of specific aspects.

According to Hernández Flores (2022), responsible communication proposes a new vision of communication based on the concrete capacities of a communicative process: honesty, empathy, transparency, interactivity (dialogue) and consistency, beyond the simple perception of it as a tool for assertive persuasion.

1.1. Digital Communication at the Service of Museums' Communication Strategy

In Spain, the normalisation of the digital environment and the use of social networks such as Facebook by museums is a reality. It is a channel that is used to make visible and promote the activity of museums and as a tool to make the general public art literate (Mas Iglesias, 2020, p.383).

In recent decades, museums have adopted the tools of Communication 2.0, where the museum is configured as an active agent of social and cultural life. This is evidenced by their participation in social networks with the generation of content and equal participation, offering full bidirectionality in communication with users (Viñarás Abad, 2012), as well as methodologies that focus on user experience (Serrano-Cobos and Calduch-Losa, 2023).

The emergence of COVID19 was a challenge for all types of organisations, as they were sometimes forced to use digital tools to connect with audiences and work in environments that had to reinvent themselves overnight, integrating new digital communication strategies (González-Liendo and García, 2023; Alvarado-Vanegas, 2024) and taking into account the cultural heritage that a museum represents (Piñeiro-Naval and Frutos-Esteban, 2023).

The digital ecosystem faced a number of challenges, and museums were no strangers to this situation. Many of them were already using digital tools and channels, but the pandemic forced them to intensify and improve their use in order to optimise resources and survive. This new way of communicating has enriched their digital strategy. In the case of the Prado Museum, for example, "communication has gained weight because it has become even more involved in the very essence of the institution's activities," explains Chaguaceda, its director of communication, allowing museums to remain open thanks to technology and digitalisation (Dircom, 2021). For Goicoechea, head of communications at the Prado Museum, it is necessary to know the networks or spaces where most people are and to speak to them in their language.

The website of the Prado Museum, which received the Special Award for its communication strategy in its bicentenary at the Dircom Ramón del Corral Awards in 2020, achieved a significant increase in user numbers during the period of confinement. This was due to the implementation of online initiatives, which resulted in a notable increase in visits to the museum's website, with a growth of almost 10%. This serves as a clear illustration of the efficacy of digitalisation as a strategic tool for organisational communication.

One of the most rapidly developing technologies in recent years, and one that museums have been able to take exceptional advantage of, is augmented reality. In fact, much of the growth in the overall market has come from this technology, which is increasingly being implemented in all types of organisations (Metz, 2017).

Therefore, technology is used to interact with society and, in the case of museums, social networks play a key role in two-way communication. They make it possible to create dialogues, to listen to the public, to know their needs in order to satisfy them, involving the public as a core element in this communicative process (Pérez Pérez, 2016).

Digital communication is necessary and essential for this type of institution, which makes such a significant contribution to society, and today it also intends to do so from the perspective of

sustainability, doing its part by integrating the 2030 Agenda into its strategic plans, with the aim of increasing its dissemination and generating maximum cultural value for citizens (Carbonell-Curralo and Viñarás Abad, 2021).

The digitisation of museums has allowed significant progress in their communication strategy in two dimensions. On the one hand, the coexistence of media and the participation or possibility of user participation, and therefore, as reference institutions, the promotion of a participatory culture. On the other hand, a contribution to a greater democratisation of the cultural and educational space (Dos-Santos-Abad et al., 2023).

1.2. Dircom: A Cornerstone in the Management of Communication Strategy

The figure of what we now understand as a communication manager began with confusion, as did organisational communication. But between the 1980s and 1990s, this comprehensive vision of communication took shape, going beyond the concept of public relations (Costa, 1995; 2001; 2009); Villafañe (1999); Martín (1997) and evolving towards a new term "corporate communication" and its professional practice acquired the name of "communication management" (Míguez and Baamonde, 2011).

For García Santamaría (2019), the dircom profile must possess a wide range of attributes that make him or her a top-level executive, whose knowledge and skills necessarily consider management aspects of enormous complexity in a new era focused on values and the satisfaction of an increasingly demanding consumer.

The communications director is responsible for the construction and protection of the corporate image, both within and outside the company. Consequently, the identification of both internal and external audiences, the promotion and dynamisation of the communication of the organisation's values, and the management of key and specific messages aimed at each type of audience are among the strategic tasks incumbent upon the communications director. The communications director plays a pivotal role in the construction and enhancement of the corporate image and communication strategy, working closely with the company's senior management.

He must develop a constant and fluid dialogue with key audiences and be an active listener. This will be essential in managing and disseminating all the organisation's intangible assets, which will contribute effectively to building its reputation. This dialogue should be conceived as an honest action to build trust as a positive attitude towards the other and credibility (Kent and Maureen, 2002).

This dircom or expert communication manager, who steers the communication ship in all its dimensions, both internally and externally, should be part of a communication department and be a leader in any type of communication, regardless of the sector of activity and the size of the organisation. SMEs should also have this type of profile among their qualified professionals, although various studies show that this is not always the case. In the vast majority of cases, they do not exist as such, or if they do, they perform other types of functions, and in many cases, they are outsourced because it is more economical to do so, giving priority to the company's bottom line. The figure of the dircom is still largely unknown in this type of organisation, which carries out external communication tasks and, to a lesser extent, internal communication (García Huguet, 2020).

This is why this type of task, so complex and at the same time full of challenges, cannot be carried out by just anyone; it must be in the hands of qualified people, communication professionals, in order to develop it successfully (Carrillo-Durán, 2016).

The communication director is therefore a leader and must act as such in any type of organisation, and in this facet of leadership, one of the essential characteristics that must be present is responsibility, which must permeate all the dimensions and departments that make up an organisation, regardless of its size and scope of action. That is why the training of responsible leaders is one of the most studied areas in recent years, responsibility from the most global perspective (De Bettignies, 2014). Likewise, the development of responsible leadership will be a strength for companies committed to this practice, as it represents a significant advance towards the well-being of people in the development of sustainability, environmental, social, cultural, etc. policies (Rodríguez Chávez, 2022).

Organisations should include leadership training plans in their budgets, with a view to medium and long-term profitability. Sometimes the focus is on the implementation of action plans in the area of internal communication and the training of leadership coaches for managers and middle managers, coordinated by a human resources professional. The integration of the different plans aims to improve

the performance and job satisfaction of the employees and, consequently, the results of the organisation (Fernández Fernández, 2021).

According to Meseguer and García (2018), the new contexts of public and private dialogue after successive economic crises have placed the business world at the centre of social development and the search for harmony between organisations, stakeholders and the environment of which they are part. This corporate social responsibility, which must be real and continuous, must become the backbone of the business policy of any organisation, with communication, and therefore dircom, being a key element in its dissemination and strengthening. In the case of museums, as cultural institutions and living entities integrated into society, this training approach would be justified.

According to Yuste (2022), the dircom should be a lighthouse that illuminates and opens the way for the organisation's communication strategy, leading the digital evolution of companies, respecting the structure of their organisational model and culture, and effectively managing the message that connects with each person. The design and implementation of appropriate strategies for organisations to connect, integrate and build trust depends on this figure.

One of the main challenges for dircms is to become the main and central axis of digital transformation. To do this, they need to be trained and aware of all the market trends and the tools they can apply. This training must include the transition from big data to smart data and how to make the most of blockchain technology, which will redefine the relationship between organisations and users. They must also explain the reasons for all the changes, promote transversality, build effective communication channels and train employees digitally to reduce the digital divide. This is not always an easy task. At first glance, one might think that dircom is gaining "power". But while communication is a growing value in the digital age, there is still a long way to go within organisations, many of which do not even have a clearly defined role.

The main objective is to ensure that the figure of the dircom is part of the structures in which decision-making takes place (boards of directors, executive committees, etc.). Often, this figure is confused with a marketing manager, where the most important thing is sales, leaving the intangible objects of his or her task in the background: reputation, brand value, influence. In the case of museums, the dircom has a very clear position as a key manager of communication, above marketing actions and plans.

2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this article is to analyse the development of communication in Spanish museums from a strategic perspective and its contribution to institutional success. This analysis is conducted from two perspectives: firstly, an examination of the actual internal structure of the museum, and secondly, an investigation into the optimal design and structure of strategic communication in this type of organisation, based on the opinions of experts in the field. This is achieved through a comparative study.

The specific objectives of this study include the following:

1. To evaluate the role and position of the communication manager in the museum's communication strategy.
2. To identify the training, knowledge, experience and qualifications of the dircom in Spanish museums.
3. To analyse the digital communication tools available to museums for the design of their communication strategies.
4. To analyse the functions or tasks of the communication department or unit that develops museums' communication strategies. Assess the role and place of the communication manager in the museum's communication strategy.

3. Methodology

Museums are institutions whose activities, although not explicitly stated in any of the meanings available to describe their functions, generate a myriad of large-scale communicative elements. From the initial conceptualisation of an exhibition, through the various stages of its creation, including

conservation, planning, design, conceptualisation, assembly, and dismantling, to the museum shop and the dissemination of content, the museum network is oiled by communication.

Regardless of its characteristics sucha as analogue, digital and hybrid, an exhibition is in itself a narrative that is conveyed through the various resources available in the museum (paintings, sculptures, projections, photographs, sounds, music, etc.). This provides the user, visitor, or client with a range of pieces of information from which they can construct their own understanding of the narrative.

It is therefore essential to grasp this communicational phenomenon in order to comprehend the significance of communication in museum institutions.

The objective of this research is to ascertain how museums approach the communication of their actions and activities in order to ensure that it has a powerful strategic character that reaches the different stakeholders (interest groups) that are or may be linked to the museums. Furthermore, the study evaluates the impact of the establishment of a communications unit within the exhibition spaces on the planning, design, execution, monitoring, and redefinition of strategic communication plans.

In order to gain insight into the communication structures, tools, and profiles of those leading museum communication units, as well as the digital and analogue platforms facilitating public-museum interaction, the 10 most visited museums in Spain, as reported by Tripadvisor in 2023, have been selected for analysis.

Furthermore, this qualitative study employs in-depth interviews with academic experts in the field of museum communication. The data provided by Isidro Moreno Sánchez and Mónica Viñarás Abad can be contrasted with the information gathered from the ten Spanish museums. Additionally, the profiles of the area leaders on LinkedIn can be consulted to gain insight into their training, experience, and specialisation.

The present research is limited by its focus on museums included in the TripAdvisor ranking, which includes the most visited exhibition spaces in Spain. However, future studies could benefit from a more comprehensive sample to gain a more nuanced understanding of how exhibition institutions define the relevance of their structure and communication teams.

Upon examining the communication units of Spanish museums, it becomes evident that there is a lack of uniformity in the nomenclature employed to describe these units. Although 80% of the institutions analysed refer to their communication units as "Communication," they are invariably accompanied by additional terms such as "press," "dissemination," "external relations," "institutional relations," "promotion," "education," "image," and so forth. The remaining 20% (see Table 1) do not even include the term "communication" in their nomenclature.

Table 1. Communication structure and location in the organisation chart – Spain

Museum	Location	Unit	Dependence	No. Members	Leadership Hierarchy
National Archaeological Museum	Madrid	Communication, press and institutional relations	Headquarters	7	Chief
Dalí Museum	Figueres	Press and communication	Headquarters	1	Chief
Guggenheim Museum	Bilbao	Communication and Image	Manager	10	Manager
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía	Madrid	Executive Office: press and protocol	Headquarters	3	Chief
El Prado National Museum	Madrid	Communication, Institutional Relations, Digital Development and International Projection	4 independent headquarters	10	Chief
Thyssen Bornemisza National Museum	Madrid	Communication and external relations / Marketing and business development	2 independent headquarters	12	Chief
Altamira National Museum and Research Centre	Santillana del Mar	Communication and education	Headquarters	NC	NC

Museum	Location	Unit	Dependence	No. Members	Leadership Hierarchy
Sephardic Museum	Toledo	Broadcasting	Headquarters	NC	NC
Picasso Museum	Barcelona	Institutional relations, press and communication / Digital content	2 headquarters	NC	NC
Picasso Museum	Malaga	Communication and Press / Promotion and Audience Development / Publications and Corporate Identity	3 headquarters	3	Artistic Director / Manager

Note: Own elaboration

4. Results

As for the consultation on the functions of the communication units, they almost unanimously agree that the dissemination or diffusion of the museum's activities is the main task they carry out. In this sense, Isidro Moreno Sánchez notes that it is still natural to use terms such as dissemination or diffusion, both in the name of the communication units and in the functions they carry out.

Mónica Viñarás Abad points out that dissemination agrees that communication is much more than dissemination, since communication is "a dialogue with the museum's public, with all the public. It is as simple and as complex as that" (Viñarás Abad, personal communication, October 20-23).

Thus, another interesting finding when evaluating the structure of the museums is that in 40% of the institutions evaluated, the functions inherent to communication are divided into four different units, which in many cases do not even depend on the same unit. Similarly, only the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Picasso Museum in Málaga have a management hierarchy for communications. In the rest, it is at the level of the head of department, which clearly shows the lack of strategic perception of the area in Spanish museum institutions. In the Museo Picasso Málaga, although the department is called "Communication and Press", the management of the corporate identity is delegated to "Collections and Exhibitions", even though this management is part of the construction of the institution's communication elements.

It is also interesting to note that the Museo Nacional El Prado, the Museo Nacional Thyssen Bornemisza and the two Picasso museums in Málaga and Barcelona are the institutions that have the most fragmented communication department, with the functions of the department in the hands of four heads who, moreover, do not report to the same directorate or management. According to the experts consulted, this prevents the creation of a comprehensive communication strategy that addresses all the organisation's stakeholders or interest groups.

According to Moreno Sánchez:

> The museum is a cultural organisation and, like any other organisation, it is essential to develop strategic communication, a global communication that takes into account all types of organisational communication and all media: transmedia communication. Although, fortunately, the dynamics of communication in museums are changing, it is worth repeating that museums are still tied to providing unidirectional information to the outside world and, in many cases, not even providing this information to the inside world. Moving from information to communication, to dialogue with internal and external audiences, is the great challenge for cultural organisations (Moreno Sánchez, personal communication, October 20, 2002).

In this sense, Viñarás Abad agrees that museum communication must be strategic and transmedial:

> Transmedia communication is communication that uses different media, different formats, different resources to convey the same message. I would say that for the sender, for the person who manages the communication, transmedia forces them to be more creative, because in the end, although it is the same message, depending on the platform, the message is very conditioned. It forces the same thing, but with different ways, characters and resources. Now it requires the total and absolute participation of the receiver, which conditions the content, because you can also

measure how people interact, and that conditions the content that is generated. It is a very lively process (Viñarás Abad, personal communication, October 2023).

Museum communication is, of course, transmedial in the strict sense of the word, within the boundaries of the museum, since the exhibition spaces, the shop, the restoration areas, the interpreters, the ticket offices and other public areas of these institutions are used as information platforms. As for the communication tools used to communicate with the public outside the museum, they are limited. Table 2 shows the communication tools used by the museums in this study to interact with their audiences. 50% of the museums surveyed do not have newsletters or bulletins to keep their audiences informed.

In the case of the National Museum and Research Centre Altamira (Museo Nacional y Centro de Investigación Altamira), it does not have its own social networks or institutional website/virtual headquarters, as it belongs to Santillana del Mar Town Council, a situation that is repeated in the case of the Museo Sefardí of Toledo, whose online headquarters is the same as that of the Toledo Town Council. The latter museum has its own social networks.

On the other hand, 20% of museums have opted for audio tools to communicate with their public. The Museo Nacional Thyssen Bornemisza and the Museo Picasso Málaga have made a podcast available to their audiences, sharing information about their exhibitions and cultural activities. The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía has done the same with its own radio station, through which it is constantly programming content to meet the information needs of its interested audiences. In addition, 50% of the museums have developed their own app to connect with their audiences and provide them with information on how their audiences use the content distributed through this channel.

Table 2. Communication tools

Museum	Newsletter	Social networking	App	Other tools	Press	Web
National Archaeological Museum	No	Yes	Yes	Virtual Headquarters	Yes	Yes
Dalí Museum	No		Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Guggenheim Museum	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía	Yes	Yes	No	Own radio	Yes	Yes
El Prado National Museum	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Thyssen Bornemisza National Museum	Yes	Yes	No	Podcast - Virtual Headquarters	Yes	Yes
Altamira National Museum and Research Centre	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Sephardic Museum	No	No	Yes	NC	Yes	Yes
Picasso Museum BCN	Yes	Yes	No	Virtual Headquarters	Yes	Yes
Picasso Museum MÁL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Podcast	Yes	Yes

Note: Own elaboration

4.1 Communication Units in Museums

The construction of a museum communication strategy requires the use of multiple platforms that allow for broad interaction with the museum's different stakeholders and ensure timely and effective attention to the information access needs of all these audiences. Table 3 shows which tasks the museums analysed in this study have assigned to communication and which have not.

This shows that internal information, sponsorship and audience development are not handled by the central information department.

The Museo Nacional El Prado, the Museo Nacional Thyssen Bornemisza, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia and the Museo Picasso Barcelona, i.e. only 40% of the institutions analysed, include the area of institutional relations in the communications department. Information on community relations, which is the source of social responsibility initiatives, was difficult to access or the museums did not respond.

Table 3. Functions of the Communication Unit

Museum	Interna	Press	Public	Digital	Sponsorship Patronage	Institutional	Community
National Archaeological Museum	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	NC
Dalí Museum	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	NC
Guggenheim Museum	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	NC
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía	No	Yes	No	Yes	Friends of the Museum	Yes	NC
El Prado National Museum	No	Yes	No	Yes	Friends of the Museum	Yes	NC
Thyssen Bornemisza National Museum	No	Yes	No	Yes	Friends of the Museum	No	NC
Altamira National Museum and Research Centre	No	No	No	No	No	No	NC
Sephardic Museum	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	NC
Picasso Museum BCN	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	NC
Picasso Museum MÁL	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	NC

Note: Own elaboration

However, the experts agree that while the use of a variety of tools to channel information and interact with their audiences is fundamental, the lack of strategies that define the use of these tools and the objectives for which they are used is more worrying. In this respect, they point out that it is essential to establish communication strategies and to evaluate them on an ongoing basis, with the aim of promoting dialogue with all interested parties.

When planning strategies, it is necessary to consider which tools are appropriate at any given time for each type of content and audience. It is therefore important that the people who work in communication are really communication experts and are able to weigh up the strategies and tools in each case. This may seem like a truism, but in the case of the museum it is not. For example, when the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam reopened, the most successful tool was the flash mob in the shopping centre, in which the protagonists of Rembrandt's The Night Watch were hung from different places and ended up forming the painting, but this tool had to be embedded in a very broad strategy. The key is to go from the local to the global in order to surprise the audience, and for that surprise to have rigorous content, interaction and interactivity. Approaching the audience where they are is something that the museum does not usually understand (Moreno Sánchez, personal communication, October 2023).

The clear definition of a communication strategy, which takes into account not only the tools to be used for transmitting information and establishing relations with the target audiences, is based on the suitability of the professionals in charge of communication. In this sense, Viñarás Abad admits that it is essential to professionalise the exercise of communication in museums.

The great challenge for museums is to ensure that the communication areas are managed by communication professionals, not only because this guarantees the suitability of strategic approaches, but also because it facilitates the rethinking of the museum as an institution. Museums need to face up to the role they now have in relation to sustainability. They are institutions that have a lot of legitimacy by virtue of being a museum, which other institutions do not have. The word 'museum' already has a character of credibility, and I think that this power is not used beyond the cultural arts. It is not used in general. So, apart from the professionalisation of communication in the purest sense, there is also the professionalisation of the museum as an institution as a brand (Viñarás Abad, personal communication, October 2023).

Moreno Sánchez adds that the professionalisation of museum communication is urgent, especially for those who are in charge of planning strategies to achieve organisational objectives.

The design and experience profile should come from the world of communication, and it would also be good if it had specific training on cultural organisations and the specificity of their audiences, which are the most complex of any organisation because they encompass the whole of society. It is the

responsibility of the museum to reach out to these non-publics, who also have the right to cultural enjoyment like everyone else (Moreno Sánchez, personal communication, October 2023).

4.2. The Museum´s Dircom

When analysing the profile of the museum's communication team, it was found that they come from computer science (40%), art history (30%) and language and literature (10%). The Museo Picasso in Barcelona has outsourced the management of the museum's communications, so the profile of the team leaders has not been included, while it was not possible to determine who is in charge of this area at the Museo Sefardí, as the institution did not provide any information in this regard (see Table 3). In the case of the Dalí Museum, the head of communication is also in charge of the Gala Foundation and the Dalí Theatre and has no other member in the organisational structure.

Table 3. Communication leaders, training and experience in the area – Spain

Museum	Director			Assistant director		
	Training Profession	Years Of experience	Experience Previous	Training Profession	Years Of experience	Experience Previous
Museum Archaeological National	Historian/Educator	1 year 4 months	Conservative	Historian	8 months	Conservative
Dalí Museum	Language and literature	3 years	NA	NA	NA	NA
Guggenheim Museum	Science of Information	21 years old	NA	Science of the information	10 years	NA
National Museum Art Centre Queen Sofia	Science of Information	33 years old	Journalist	Science of information	6 years	Communications Director
Museum National El Prado	Science of the information	6 years	Director of communication	Science of information	5 years	NA
National Museum Thyssen Bornemisza	Historian with a master's degree in communication	14 years	Journalist	Science of information	17 years	Press
Altamira National Museum and Research Centre	Historian	2 years	Museum technique	Historian	21 years old	Training of guides
Sephardic Museum	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Picasso Museum BCN	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Picasso Museum MÁL	Information Science	20 years	Teacher	Science of information	21 years old	Reporter

Note: Own elaboration

The communications manager of a museum, as of any organisation, is the meeting point between the organisation and its internal and external audiences. He/she is the interface of the museum. It is often said that he/she is the person in charge of the museum's communication and dissemination campaigns, but he/she has to be much more, he/she has to be in charge of the dialogue with internal and external audiences, both in the physical and virtual space.

If we look at the responsibilities of communication managers in museums, such as the Museo del Prado, for example, we read: "Under the direction of the management, he/she directs and coordinates the external communication policy of the Museo Nacional del Prado, the organisation of information campaigns, relations with the media and the dissemination of content through social networks. This definition shows that they are thinking more about information than about communication with society

as a whole, and that they do not understand the real importance of internal communication. They forget to ask: who are our audiences meeting face to face? Is it easy to understand the importance of the person who sends out the tickets, the people who control the entrance to the museum, the security guards and the rooms? These people are just as important for communication as those in charge of social networks in the virtual space (Moreno Sánchez, personal communication, October 2023).

4.3 Is Museum Communication Strategic and Transmedial?

From the inside, museums build communication processes with a transmedial character, using an infinite number of platforms (exhibition halls, cafeterias, gardens, educational areas, etc.) to project, transmit and disseminate information, as well as to generate interaction with visitors. However, there are many limitations to transferring this communication methodology outside the museum walls.
    Moreno Sánchez states the following:

> The need to make it transmedial is beginning to be glimpsed, but the challenge is to assume the dialogue with the audience, both physical and virtual, as something essential for the organisation, something necessary to take a step towards that future that has already arrived (personal communication, October 2023).

The need to create a dialogue with the public and to allow them to assume their role as prosumers through the narrative resources offered in tours and exhibitions is a task that requires particular effort.
    In general, museums do not promote the prosumer. Perhaps they encourage it in some way when they run competitions on social networks, but beyond that, with the amount of resources available, they don't take advantage of it. There are some that occasionally have interesting initiatives, but not many. I remember a study we did last year, for International Women's Day, and we looked at what content was generated from that day, and we were surprised that it was as minimal as possible. It was such an important milestone. A transmedia communication strategy could have much more impact. I think the museum has an enormous capacity to promote not only culture, but also social aspects, which is rarely used. In general, the impact at the moment is minuscule. I think its impact is on very few people and on very specific people who are already interested in the museum, in art (Viñarás Abad, personal communication, October 2023).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The exercise of strategic communication in Spanish museums includes the evaluation of the tools used to communicate with the different interest groups of these institutions, not only the visitors. It also includes a review of who manages the communication strategies, their training and specialisation in the field, in order to guarantee the adequacy of their professionalism. It is a detailed review of how, by whom, when and where these communication actions are carried out.
    The starting point of the study was the analysis of the development of communication from a strategic point of view in Spanish museums, developing a comparative analysis between what actually exists and what should be, that is, the implementation of a strategic vision of communication led by dircom, in this type of institution that is so valuable to society from different points of view; the role played by dircom, their qualifications and professionalisation; the digital communication tools used by museums and the tasks carried out by communication departments or units.
    The data show that, in the case of several museums, what should be at the heart of the development of the communication strategy is quite different from what it actually is. The bidirectionality of communication is forgotten in the implementation of this series of concepts, the necessary dialogue with the people who visit the museum, so that they feel they are an active part of it, and not intruders who, "if it were not for the importance given to the number of visitors, would be left behind" (Moreno Sánchez, personal communication, October 2023).
    It is therefore necessary to understand that the heart of the institutional function of museums is based on communication, otherwise works of art and other samples of heritage would be inert objects. Artistic manifestations, in their various categories, have always constructed and embodied their ideas as a construct of a history that they want to show. This history, which is then reconstructed by curators

and curatorial staff in order to be shown to the interested public of the museum, should be the object of greater care and respect in museum institutions.

In this sense, the lack of professionalisation and specialisation of communication managers obviously has an impact on the quality of the planning and implementation of strategies that contribute to the growth and extension of the narrative discourse beyond the immediate horizon. The shortage of communication professionals is evident in the research because anyone is considered capable of performing these functions. No one in their right mind would think of assigning conservation, restoration, etc. to a communication professional, yet the opposite is often the case. However, as noted above, when communications professionals are fortunately brought in, they are usually not on the board. This is a form of governance that is showing slight signs of change, but it is a slow and ineffective process.

This lack of decision-making power in communication units is also reflected in the category they are given within the organisation's structures. Generally speaking, they are classified as heads and not as directorates or managers, which makes it difficult for the human capital of museums to understand the importance of this area. It is essential that these units be promoted and placed in an advisory position to the board of directors, the board of trustees or the director general, in order to ensure that the strategic lines defined are binding and facilitate the timely attention of all the institution's bodies.

On the other hand, given the power of the public, strengthened by the arrival of social networks and other digital communication platforms that facilitate the extension of the museum narrative beyond the doors of the museum and even beyond the borders of the city in which they live, it is unthinkable to continue to limit the role of the visitor as the prosumer that he is. The ban on photography - it has been proven that not even a flash can damage the works - and the constant reminder of the silence of the tomb have become medieval practices that must be overcome quickly. This self-imposed distance from the public is the cause of the decline in the number of visitors to these institutions, which is a failure to fulfil their social, educational and awareness-raising role and function.

Experts agree on the need to consider the figure of the Director of Communication (Dircom) in museums, i.e. a professional with a strategic profile, in charge of the different variants of the museum in situ and online, such as virtual, mobile and social, taking into account the interactivity (technological) and interaction (physical) that it must promote. The multiplicity of target audiences, the convergence of interests in these institutions, requires a transmedial character of the museum's communication, and this complexity makes it imperative to approach each of its variants with the same dedication, in order to respect each target audience equally. It is also necessary to respond to their needs, expectations and constraints of a technological, cultural, physical and cognitive nature.

The aim of this article is therefore to promote and support the professionalism of communication in museum institutions. Their contribution as institutions that educate, train, entertain and bring growth and value to people, thus improving society, justifies this need.

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