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Lucia Spálová, Marek Štosel, Łukasz P. Wojciechowski
Application of Virtual and Augmented Reality in the Context of the Development of Art Marketing Communication in the Space of Selected Cultural Institutions

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Abstract

As new technological tools, virtual and augmented reality caused a revolution in culture and art during the critical situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It allowed the viewers to become the co-creators of art, which then changes under their influence. The property/essence of interactive art is the creation of a situation in which the visitor to a cultural institution comes into direct contact with an art object, which fundamentally changes the reception of the artefact. The aim of this scientific study is to identify the hybrid models of visitor participation in the artistic events hosted by Slovak cultural institutions – both offline and online – with a focus on interactive technologies. Using the case study method, we analyzed the contradictions in the definition of interactivity in terms of the pragmatic enhancement of the visitor experience in the cultural institutions (interactive work versus interactive marketing communication) in the interdisciplinary contexts of selected cultural institutions: Ponitrian Museum, Bratislava City Museum and Poliankovo Digital Gallery. The results show a scarce use of augmented reality in the art marketing communication of Ponitrian Museum, and interactive artefacts being part of the exhibition in the other analyzed institutions.

Introduction

Art marketing is a specific area of marketing communication intended for the field of culture and art in the commercial and non-profit sectors[1]. It includes both visual arts and marketing in all areas of culture, art and cultural heritage. In a broader sense, it is the marketing of cultural organizations and various institutions focused on the dissemination of culture and art[2]. Art marketing is specific: it is necessary to subordinate marketing to artistic goals and avoid the adaptation of the products to market requirements, but rather attract the audience to the current offer[3]. Marketing mainly serves to make the mutual communication between cultural organizations and their audience more efficient. Its role is not to interfere with the artistic ambitions of cultural organizations, but rather to correctly present, time and dose its offering, and to balance the ratio between consumer-attractive products and projects that are interesting from an artistic point of view without jeopardizing the main mission of the cultural organization[4].

Interactivity and participation are becoming ever so typical for art, and they are also turning into the modes of reception among the addressees of art. The recipient's participatory role in art marketing blurs the boundaries between art and amateur creation and participatory marketing communication, and various hybrid communications often emerge. New technology triggered a revolution in art and allowed the viewers to become co-creators of art, which changes under their influence. The creation of a situation in which the viewer comes into direct contact with the art object, is the property or essence of interactive art and interactive actions[5].

The aim of this scientific study is to identify the hybrid models of visitor participation in the artistic events hosted by Slovak cultural institutions – both offline and online – with a focus on interactive technologies.

1 Interactivity - Art Marketing or an Interactive Artefact?

For several years, the market for cultural and artistic products has been intensively vocal about cultural institutions being on the verge of decline[6]. Owing to this fact, they require immediate support in terms of technological and innovative approaches in the context of the development and improvement of cultural and artistic presentations[7]. A complex digital rendering of cultural, museum and gallery spaces and exhibited artifacts using immersive virtual and augmented reality technology is required[8]. The use of virtual and augmented reality is obvious from the point of view of the pragmatic effects and attractiveness of cultural and artistic presentation[9]. However, the theoretical anchoring of the use of the above technology seems more problematic from the point of view of art sciences and media and communication studies[10]. We documented the hybrid relationships of the interactivity of the work of art, the space of the

1   TOWSE, R., HANDKA, CH.: *Handbook on the Digital Creative Economy (Elgar Original Reference)*. Cheltenham : Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, p. 258.

2   KERRIGAN, F., FRASER, P., ÖZBILGIN, M.: *Arts Marketing*. London, New York : Routledge, 2004, p. 98; See also: ČÁBYOVÁ, Ľ., KUSÁ, A., ZAUŠKOVÁ, A., ĎURIŠOVÁ, L.: Visual Identity of Universities: Logo as a Visual Symbol of University. In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 96-105; SEDLÁK, J., LANČARIČ, P., PRIBILA, K.: Hidden Meanings of Image of Communication in the Medium of Photography (Wisdom and Madness of Photography). In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 72-82.

3   TAJTÁKOVÁ, M.: *Marketing kultúry: Ako osloviť a udržať si publikum*. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2010, p. 46.

4   PENIAK, J., PÚCHOVSKÁ, O., ŠTR-BOVÁ, E.: *Korona – Art – Media: Digitálna konverzia marketingu umenia*. Bratislava : Európska Akadémia Manažmentu, Marketingu a Médií, 2020, p. 30.

5   ŠVECOVÁ, M., KAČINCOVÁ PRED-MERSKÁ, A., KAŇUKOVÁ, N.: Digital Skills and the Awareness of Seniors about Virtual Reality. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 120-131.

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9   FORMÁNEK, M., FILIP, V., HNAT, A.: Komparácia moderného a tradičného spôsobu percepcie informácií o vybraných objektoch kultúrneho dedičstva. In *Slovenský národopis*, 2020, Vol. 68, No. 1, p. 51. [online]. [2022-12-07]. Available at: <https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/03251146etn01-2020-23-03-formanek-filip-hnat.pdf>.

10   PRAVDOVÁ, H., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., PANASENKO, N.: Homo Corporalis as the Communicated Muse and Centrepiece of Commercialized Culture. In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 69.

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artistic experience, and the media types for the artistic presentation in the below model (Figure 1).
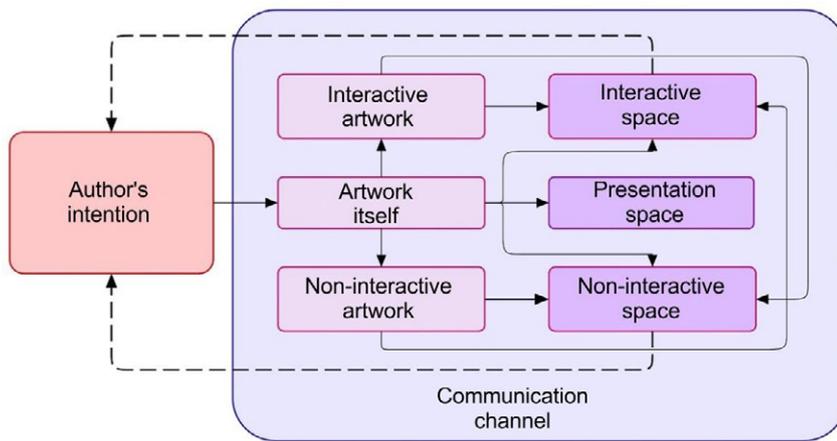

Figure 1: Model of Interactivity of Artwork, Space and Media Type.
Source: own processing.

This model presents the potential variants of intentional or arbitrary aspects in the relationship between the author of the artifact and the work itself, which may have a physical or digital form or exist as a conceptual fusion of both forms of reality. An artwork can be interactive in relation to the recipient of the artefact, taking into account the above intentions of the author, as we can assume that the work can become interactive even without the prior intention of its creator, e.g. through creative additive interventions (e.g. in a digital interactive environment). The author's intentions projected into the work itself at the level of presentation can be reflected in the author's decision to install/ exhibit the work in a space, which can be divided into a space that was planned by the author to be i

interactive, and a space that wasn't. Let's not forget the cases when the initial intention of the author regarding the space is interpreted e.g. by the employees of a cultural institution (photographers, website creators, etc.), or may be included by the recipients among their institutional, public or private communication channels.

2 Analysis of Interactivity (Virtual and Augmented Reality) in the Premises of Slovak Cultural Institutions

Method
Based on the above contradiction of the definition of interactivity in terms of the pragmatic enhancement of the experience of visitors to cultural institutions (interactive work versus interactive marketing communication), we formulated the following research questions:
What hybrid forms of interactivity (implementation of virtual and augmented reality) are used by Slovak cultural institutions?
What are the different relationships between the hybrid presentations of artwork and its marketing communication?
What criteria determine the display of artwork in a digital environment as marketing communication and as a separate type of interactive artwork?

Based on the operationalization of the research problem, we decided to use a case study as a methodological procedure. A case study belongs to the methods of qualitative research[11]; it differs from other types of studies (biographical, phenomenological, ethnographic) in that it includes an intensive analysis and description of separate units or systems bounded by time and space. According to the recommendations by Yin[12], we used the so-called collective case study, which involves multiple cases, and is aimed at exploring the similarities and differences between several instrumental cases.
The research material was collected in March-July 2022 and the selection criterion was the use of virtual and augmented reality in cultural institutions. Only 3 cultural institutions met the criterion:

11   HANCOCK, D. R., ALGOZZINE, B.: *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers.* New York : Teachers College Press, 2006, p. 97.
12   YIN, R. K.: *Case Study Research and Applications.* New York : SAGE Publications, 2018, p. 155.

- During the Covid pandemic, **Ponitrian Museum** used both technological tools at the same time. Virtual reality was used as a supplement to museum exhibits, and augmented reality as part of a marketing campaign;
- **Bratislava City Museum** has a free virtual reality service in the context of making the museum exhibition more interactive;
- **Poliankovo Digital Gallery** has implemented virtual and augmented reality directly into the exhibition and identifies them as visual products that add yet another dimension to the exhibition space.

Results

Ponitrian Museum

Ponitrian Museum is currently perceived by local society as a leading cultural institution of a depository nature with a focus on collection-building, science, research, culture, education and methodology. As an important regional cultural institution with high socio-cultural and historical potential, Ponitrian Museum prioritizes the traditional forms of oral presentation of cultural, artistic and historical collection items. Ponitrian Museum also provides digital virtual reality services, but only in the form of additional digital and visual material – a service that is part of the internal digital media – the Ponitrian Museum blog, but only to a single cultural and artistic exhibition – *"Theater in the Museum, Museum in the*

Theater". Based on these findings, we have identified this additional virtual reality service as a free service of the cultural institution that the visitors can experience without directly visiting the museum exhibition, which is implemented on the grounds of the cultural institution and not as a digital medium of digital communication that conveys the basic information about the exposure – product, or the organization as such. The concept of augmented reality, which is fundamentally different from virtual reality, is also part of the presentation of Ponitrian Museum. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Ponitrian Museum came up with a solution to more effectively enhance the cultural and artistic experience for the visitors. In this case, the concept of augmented reality became part of the art marketing communication of cultural and artistic artifacts through digital media – social platforms (*Facebook* and *Instagram*). However, Ponitrian Museum only used this visual concept twice. Currently, these two art artifacts are exclusively visible on *Facebook* and *Instagram*, which are officially used by the cultural organization as the primary digital communication media for interaction or participation with permanent and potential recipients. After a thorough analysis of these two digital and artistic reinterpretations, which were supplemented and completed with digital elements by an external application – *MyHeritage*, we came to the conclusion that Ponitrian Museum correctly and materially

responded to the needs of the online visitors during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, but in a minimalistic design and scope. Currently, Ponitrian Museum does not have any similar activities which would resemble this visual concept, through which it presented its cultural and artistic artifacts and subsequently interacted with the visitors in this specific period.

Figure 2: Use of Virtual Reality in the Premises of Cultural Institutions - Ponitrian Museum.
Source: PONITRIAN MUSEUM NITRA: *Theater in the Museum, Museum in the Theater: 3-D Virtual Tour.* [online]. [2023-03-18]. Available at: <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=oq32u7Sgq5s>.

Figure 3: Use of Augmented Reality as Part of Art Marketing Communication - Ponitrian Museum.
Source: PONITRIAN MUSEUM NITRA: *Oskar Szentiváyi | POZVÁNKA na aktuálnu*

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výstavu Oskar Szentivanyi sa narodil 20.10.1840. S manželkou Melidou, dcérou Johana Hammera a Frederiky... [online]. [2023-04-18]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=4009225195799727>.

Figure 4: Use of Augmented Reality as Part of Art Marketing Communication - Ponitrian Museum.
Source: PONITRIAN MUSEUM NITRA: Barónka *Klára Huňadyová sa stala manželkou grófa Kristiána Palušku. Manželia vlastnili v Zlatých Moravciach kaštieľ ešte pred rodom Migazziovcov. Zaslúžili sa...* [online]. [2023-04-18]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=4365501193464353>.

Bratislava City Museum
Similar to other Slovak and foreign museums, Bratislava City Museum is a unique cultural and historical institution dealing with collection-building, scientific research and cultural and educational activities at the local, regional and international levels. Bratislava City Museum also presents individual artefacts to its visitors in a traditional way – an oral presentation given by museum workers/lecturers. Currently, Bratislava City Museum and Ponitrian Museum use innovative virtual imaging in the representation/rendition of cultural and historical artifacts in

the museum spaces, the difference being that Bratislava City Museum uses this digital concept in a much more developed form. Bratislava City Museum has started implementing the activities to boost visitor interest in the museum spaces since in 2011. The goal of the organization at that time was to use virtual reality for a more intensive digitization of all museum exhibits that the museum has at its disposal. Based on this complex digitization, the museum was able to construct an acceptable virtual space on its website in the form of a free additional service that the visitors may experience at any time. Despite this innovative step, Bratislava City Museum has not directly introduced virtual reality into the interior of this cultural organization for the public to actively try this technology. We do not underestimate this type of visual service; we only consider it insufficiently addressed from the point of view of evoking a complex cultural or artistic experience in the visitors. We are convinced that a direct implementation of virtual and augmented reality to support and develop the art marketing communication of a cultural institution would be much more beneficial. It would demonstrate the individual cultural and historical artifacts or host a virtual tour of a specific urban part of the city at a certain period of time, and at the same time it could be used as a digital medium intended for communication with the visitors. We assume that this very technological construct would be more attractive than the variant currently preferred

by the museum. However, we must point out that Bratislava City Museum does not use the concept of virtual and augmented reality in order to make marketing communication more efficient, as can be seen in the case of Ponitrian Museum. In two separate cases, Ponitrian Museum used augmented reality as a tool to support marketing communication in order to boost interest in a specific museum exhibit – *On a Perch with the Nobility in the Hunting Lands under Tribe*č. It is necessary to point out that the activities related to art marketing communication for the benefit of the clientèle/visitors are used adequately by both museums, however, the degree of use of modern visual and technological tools/media, which should currently be the most preferred, is low. Both museums tend to focus on the traditional digital media such as blogs, podcasts or communication on social networks.

Figure 5: Use of Virtual Reality in the Premises of Cultural Institutions - Bratislava City Museum.
Source: BRATISLAVA CITY MUSEUM: *Sacral Art Exhibition.* [online]. [2023-03-18]. Available at: <https://mmb.pano3d.eu/>.

Poliankovo Digital Gallery
Poliankovo Digital Gallery is identified by the local community and its permanent and potential visitors as

an innovative cultural space, which is characterized precisely by the fact that it connects and enhances modern technologies with local traditional culture and art at a high technological level. The digital gallery purposefully uses relatively modern tools and media of digital representation and communication, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, holographic projection, 3D projection, shadow play and others, as part of the presentation of their cultural exhibition. These sophisticated tools, which were purposefully implemented in the cultural space for the purpose of digitization and revitalization of the actual space, are in this case identified as products of a cultural organization that add a new dimension to the exhibition, and they cannot be characterized as the tools and media of art marketing communication. Poliankovo Digital Gallery currently also offers several specialized exhibitions, which include innovative virtual and augmented reality. Poliankovo Digital Gallery offers an interactive exhibition *The Secret World in Pictures*. This exhibition is characterized by the fact that the exhibited images are supplemented by special elements of augmented reality, which animate/ move the captured image through an external application and thus create a new artifact with the elements of digital projection – a *digifact*. In this regard, it should be noted that it is still not a concept we can consider to be part of digital art marketing communication, but rather a digital art product of a cultural institution, which is part of a gallery exhibition. The digital gallery also offers a

cultural and artistic exhibition, which is characterized as a speleological exhibition with certain parts of the Domica Cave depicted through virtual reality. In this case, the digital gallery used the possibility of a full installation of virtual reality, which is supported by a digital oculus for the visitors who thus experience the entire digital rendition of a specific cave space. We identify this particular concept of depicting a cave as a product of a cultural institution and not a medium of marketing communication through which the cultural institution interacts with the clients. When looking at the activities connected with art marketing communication, we find that Poliankovo Digital Gallery only uses the social networks as a digital medium to communicate with the clients, and only in the traditional form of images and text posts without the use of virtual or augmented reality, as can be seen in the above cases.
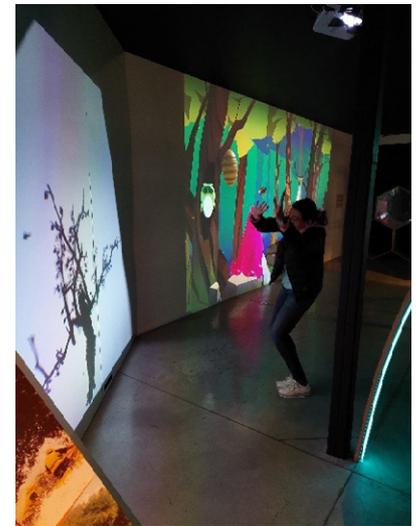

Figure 7: Use of Virtual Reality in the Premises of Cultural Institutions - Poliankovo Digital Gallery. Source: own processing.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis of Slovak cultural institutions that have implemented interactive virtual and augmented reality points to the blurring of the boundaries between the interactive artefacts and their marketing communication. The hybrid forms of interactivity transform the traditional relations between the visitor and the artefact; interactivity is used both during the reception of an artwork and at the same time as part of the communication mix in marketing communication.

Ponitrian Museum is the only museum in the Nitra Region that uses virtual reality. However, this concept serves the visitors as an interactive product – an online supplement to the remote representation of the cultural exhibition, and not as a communication medium. It simultaneously uses the concept of augmented reality, which the cultural

Figure 6: Use of Virtual Reality in the Premises of Cultural Institutions - Poliankovo Digital Gallery. Source: own processing.

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institution directly integrates into the marketing and communication campaign.

Bratislava City Museum is characterized by the fact that it used virtual reality even before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, but not within its marketing and communication strategies. At present, this concept is only used as a freely accessible online supplementary service that digitally conveys a specific exhibition space of the institution to virtual visitors, just as in the case of Ponitrian Museum.

As the only cultural and artistic institution in Slovakia, Poliankovo Digital Gallery has created its gallery exposition exclusively with the help of virtual and augmented reality, holographic projections, light and reflection projections. On the other hand, the organization does not use these devices for the purpose of communication, through which it could interact or participate with the visitors in a more efficient and sophisticated way. The research question "What criteria determine the display of artwork in a digital environment as marketing communication and as a separate type of interactive artwork?" is answered as follows: we consider the approach of Ponitrian Museum, which devised a solution to use augmented reality to promote a certain cultural-artistic artifact, to be innovative. Through an external application, the museum digitized two artistic portraits, which, after being photographed, were brought to life and started moving. Such a digital revival can also be termed *digital personification*. Subsequently, this new digital product was placed on two social networks (*Facebook* and *Instagram*), through which the cultural

institution began to communicate with clients. The research question "What criteria determine the display of artwork in a digital environment as marketing communication and as a separate type of interactive artwork?" is answered as follows: when a cultural artifact is placed on a social platform (or other digital media type) that serves as a space for interaction and participation with the recipients, we conclude that it is a form of digital marketing communication through which we present the given artifact.

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Prof. Mgr. Lucia Spálová, PhD. regards the transdisciplinary nature of research anchored in social sciences, in critical social psychology and in discursive linguistics. The main topic of this research in the field of media and communication studies is the social responsibility of media discrimination in the media, media portrayals of stereotypes and effectivity of persuasion techniques in digital communication.

Mgr. Marek Štosel is currently a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Mass Media Communication and Advertisement, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. His scientific focus is primarily on art marketing and art marketing communication in cultural and artistic institutions. The core of his research is the identification of changes in communication patterns by digitization which were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, he also specializes in the use and applications of non-traditional marketing and communication media in culture and art, such as virtual and augmented reality.

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