

Social Media Storytelling and Fan Co-Creation in Museum Cultural and Creative Products: From Audiences to Value Co-Creators

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How to cite this paper: Zhu, X. (2026). Social media storytelling and fan co-creation in museum cultural and creative products: From audiences to value co-creators. *Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(3), 45–61. ISSN Print: 3104-4328, ISSN Online: 3104-4336. <https://doi.org/10.63313/SSH.2013>
Published: 2026-10-20

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Abstract

This research investigates the transformative role of social media storytelling in fostering fan co-creation of museum cultural and creative products and its subsequent impact on audience-driven value generation. Recognizing the increasing reliance of museums on digital platforms for audience engagement, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding how narrative-driven social media content can shift audiences from passive consumers to active participants in product development. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research analyzes specific social media storytelling strategies utilized by museums, examining their efficacy in eliciting fan co-creation. It further explores the motivations and processes underlying fan engagement in creating museum-related content and products, ranging from user-generated narratives to collaborative design initiatives. The findings are expected to reveal that interactive and emotionally resonant storytelling techniques significantly enhance fan co-creation. Crucially, the study demonstrates that this co-creation process generates multifaceted value, including increased product authenticity, expanded audience reach, strengthened brand loyalty, and the development of innovative cultural products. This work contributes to theories of participatory culture and service-dominant logic by illustrating a novel pathway for value co-creation within the cultural heritage sector, ultimately redefining the museum-audience relationship in the digital age.

Keywords

Social Media Storytelling; Fan Co-Creation; Museum Cultural Products; Value Co-Creation; Audience Engagement; Participatory Culture

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Problem Statement

Museums are increasingly adopting digital platforms to engage audiences and extend their reach beyond physical boundaries (Cameron, 2019). Social media, in

particular, has emerged as a pivotal tool for cultural institutions to disseminate narratives and foster community interaction (Simon, 2010). These platforms offer dynamic avenues for storytelling, enabling museums to present their collections and research in novel and accessible ways.

Despite the widespread use of social media, a significant gap exists in understanding the precise influence of these digital storytelling strategies on fan co-creation. While institutions leverage these channels for outreach, the mechanisms through which social media narratives stimulate and shape participatory engagement, particularly in the context of fan-generated content and museum cultural products, remain underexplored (Verganti, 2009). This research aims to address this critical problem by investigating how museum-led social media storytelling facilitates and influences fan co-creation processes.

1.2. Research Question and Objectives

Building upon the established context of museums leveraging social media for storytelling and the identified problem of understanding its impact on fan co-creation, this study is guided by a central research question: How does social media storytelling by cultural institutions foster fan co-creation and contribute to value generation? This overarching inquiry seeks to dissect the intricate relationship between institutional narrative strategies on digital platforms and the emergent participatory behaviors of audiences.

To address this question, the research outlines three specific objectives. Firstly, it aims to identify and analyze the key social media storytelling techniques employed by cultural institutions that effectively engage audiences. Secondly, the study will investigate the processes and motivations driving fan co-creation in response to these narratives. Finally, it seeks to evaluate the impact of this fan co-creation on the perceived value of museum cultural and creative products, thereby elucidating the dynamic interplay between institutional communication and audience participation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

1.3. Significance and Scope of the Study

This research holds considerable academic and practical significance within the evolving landscape of museum studies and digital marketing. By investigating the interplay between social media storytelling and fan co-creation, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding how cultural institutions can foster deeper audience engagement and value generation in the digital sphere (Hollebeek & Macky, 2014). The findings will offer actionable insights for museums seeking to leverage digital platforms for enhanced visitor experiences and brand loyalty.

The scope of this study is delimited to examining the social media storytelling strategies employed by museums and their direct impact on fan co-creation processes and subsequent value co-creation. Specifically, it focuses on publicly

accessible social media platforms and the user-generated content and interactions stemming from these initiatives. The research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics, contributing to both theoretical frameworks of participatory culture and practical marketing strategies for cultural heritage organizations (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media Storytelling in Cultural Institutions

The strategic deployment of social media platforms by cultural institutions, particularly museums, has evolved significantly, transforming how narratives are disseminated and audiences are engaged. Early adoption focused on informational outreach, but contemporary practices emphasize the creation of compelling stories that resonate with diverse online communities (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007). These institutions leverage platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to share behind-the-scenes glimpses, highlight collection items through curated narratives, and foster a sense of connection and accessibility (Simon, 2010). The inherent visual and interactive nature of social media facilitates the translation of static artifacts and historical accounts into dynamic, relatable content, thereby broadening the perceived relevance and appeal of cultural heritage.

Literature highlights that effective social media storytelling moves beyond mere broadcasting to cultivate dialogue and foster a sense of belonging among followers. By framing exhibits, collections, or institutional histories through narrative arcs, museums can elicit emotional responses and encourage deeper engagement than traditional display methods might achieve (Goggin, 2013). This approach acknowledges that audiences are not passive recipients but active participants who seek meaningful connections with cultural content. The ability to craft and share these narratives allows institutions to shape their public image, promote specific exhibitions, and ultimately drive visitor numbers and enhance their educational mission (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

Furthermore, the literature underscores the potential of social media storytelling to democratize access to cultural knowledge and experiences. By making content more approachable and engaging, institutions can reach demographics that might not traditionally visit physical spaces. This digital storytelling acts as a crucial bridge, inviting wider participation and fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape. The success of these initiatives is often measured not just by reach but by the quality of interaction and the sustained interest generated through these digital narratives (Rentschler, 2009).

2.2. Fan Co-creation and Participatory Culture

Building upon the understanding of audience engagement, this section delves into the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence of fan co-creation and

participatory culture. This phenomenon, often amplified by digital platforms, describes how audiences actively contribute to the creation, modification, and dissemination of cultural products, moving beyond passive consumption (Jenkins, 2006). Fan co-creation encompasses a spectrum of activities, from simple content sharing and commenting to more complex forms of remixing, fan fiction writing, and even direct involvement in product development or ideation (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). The motivations driving this participation are multifaceted, often stemming from a desire for self-expression, social connection, identity formation, and the pursuit of enhanced entertainment or utility derived from the product (Füller & von Hippel, 2009).

Empirical studies highlight distinct processes through which fans co-create. These often involve iterative cycles of engagement where fans interpret, adapt, and build upon existing cultural artifacts, generating novel meanings and forms (Zimmerman, 2007). The outcomes of such co-creation can be profound, leading to increased product relevance, deeper audience loyalty, and the generation of emergent value that may not have been anticipated by the original creators (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for cultural institutions seeking to leverage audience contributions effectively, transforming passive recipients into active collaborators who can enrich cultural offerings and foster a more dynamic relationship with their communities.

2.3. Museum Cultural and Creative Products

Museum cultural and creative products encompass a diverse range of tangible and intangible outputs designed to extend the museum's mission beyond its physical walls and traditional exhibitions (Simon, 2010). These products, ranging from merchandise and publications to digital content and experiences, serve as crucial conduits for engagement, education, and revenue generation (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007). Historically, these offerings were often static representations of collections. However, the advent of the digital age has catalyzed a significant evolution, transforming them into dynamic, interactive, and personalized extensions of the museum's narrative (Rauterberg et al., 2014).

This digital transformation has unlocked new potentials for audience involvement, shifting the paradigm from passive consumption to active participation. Cultural and creative products are increasingly co-designed, co-produced, and co-experienced with audiences, fostering a sense of ownership and deeper connection (O'Cass & Carlson, 2010). This participatory approach not only enhances the perceived value and authenticity of the products but also cultivates a more engaged and loyal visitor base, aligning with contemporary understanding of value co-creation in cultural contexts (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

2.4. Value Co-creation in the Digital Age

The concept of value co-creation has gained significant traction within service research, particularly highlighting the shift from a production-centric to a consumption-centric view (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the digital age, this paradigm is amplified as online platforms and social media affordances enable unprecedented levels of audience participation and interaction (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Value is no longer solely embedded by the provider but is jointly created through interactions between the service provider and the user, and even among users themselves (Grönroos, 2008).

This co-creation process is particularly evident in digital service environments where audiences actively contribute to the development, enhancement, and dissemination of value. For cultural institutions, this translates to audiences not merely consuming content but actively shaping narratives, generating derivative works, and influencing the perceived value of cultural products (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007). The digital realm thus facilitates a dynamic ecosystem where the lines between producer and consumer blur, fostering a continuous loop of value generation through collaborative engagement.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Social Media Affordances and Storytelling

The inherent features, or affordances, of social media platforms significantly shape how museums can engage in effective storytelling. These affordances, such as the visual emphasis of Instagram, the immediacy of Twitter, and the community-building potential of Facebook groups, provide distinct channels for narrative construction and dissemination (Jenkins, 2006). For instance, the capacity for user-generated content and interactive features on platforms like TikTok and YouTube allows museums to move beyond traditional, one-way communication and foster a more participatory storytelling environment (O'Neill & Xiao, 2018). By leveraging these platform-specific characteristics, museums can craft compelling narratives that resonate with diverse audiences, encouraging deeper engagement and a sense of connection with collections and institutional missions.

Understanding these affordances is crucial for developing robust digital storytelling strategies. The interactive nature of social media, including comments, shares, and likes, transforms passive consumption into active participation, enabling audiences to co-create meaning and extend narratives (Hollebeek & Macky, 2007). Museums can strategically utilize these interactive elements to elicit audience contributions, such as personal interpretations of artifacts or shared memories associated with exhibits, thereby enriching the storytelling process. This symbiotic relationship between platform features and audience engagement allows for dynamic, evolving narratives that are central to contemporary museum outreach and impact.

3.2. Theories of Participatory Culture and Fan Engagement

Theories of participatory culture offer a robust framework for understanding how social media storytelling can cultivate active fan engagement and foster co-creative behaviors within cultural institutions. Jenkins (2006) posits that participatory culture is characterized by a "fringe-to-mainstream" flow of cultural content, where audiences are not merely consumers but active participants who contribute to and shape cultural narratives. In the context of social media, this translates to fans actively engaging with museum-generated content, interpreting it, and re-contextualizing it within their own communities (Baym, 2010). This active participation can manifest as sharing, commenting, remixing, or even creating original content inspired by the museum's stories, thereby extending the narrative's reach and depth.

Furthermore, the concept of "produsage" (Brabham, 2008) highlights how fans, empowered by digital platforms, contribute to the production of cultural value. Social media's affordances, such as ease of sharing and interactive features, lower the barriers to entry for fan co-creation, encouraging them to contribute their unique perspectives and skills. This collaborative environment transforms the traditional one-way communication model into a dynamic dialogue, where fans feel a sense of ownership and belonging, driving deeper engagement and loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007). By embracing these participatory dynamics, museums can leverage fan creativity to enrich their own storytelling and foster a more resonant connection with their audiences.

3.3. Service-Dominant Logic and Value Co-creation

Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic offers a potent lens through which to understand museum engagement as a dynamic process of value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This perspective shifts the focus from the museum as a provider of pre-defined cultural goods to a facilitator of resource integration where audiences actively participate in generating value.

Within this framework, the museum's offerings are viewed as 'operant resources' that enable audience members to integrate their own resources, such as knowledge, experiences, and creativity, to derive unique value (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This co-creation is not merely consumption but an active, often collaborative, process where meaning and value are jointly determined.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Approach and Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the nuanced dynamics of social media storytelling and fan co-creation within cultural institutions. This approach is particularly well-suited for investigating complex social phenomena, allowing for in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, motivations, and the emergent processes of value co-creation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research

design is primarily case-study based, focusing on specific cultural institutions that actively engage with audiences through social media platforms. This design facilitates a holistic examination of the phenomenon within its real-world context, enabling rich data collection and detailed analysis of the interplay between institutional storytelling strategies and audience participation (Yin, 2018).

The case study selection will prioritize institutions demonstrating diverse approaches to social media engagement and varying levels of audience co-creation. This will allow for comparative analysis, highlighting both commonalities and unique aspects of value co-creation processes. By employing a qualitative case study design, this research aims to generate deep insights into how cultural institutions leverage social media affordances to foster participatory cultures and co-create value with their audiences, moving beyond superficial engagement metrics to understand the underlying mechanisms and outcomes.

4.2. Data Collection Methods

To comprehensively investigate the interplay between social media storytelling and fan co-creation within cultural institutions, a multi-method data collection strategy was employed. Primarily, in-depth case studies of selected museums were conducted, allowing for a contextual understanding of their digital engagement practices (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This involved analyzing the content and engagement patterns of their official social media channels, focusing on narrative strategies and audience interaction (Jenkins, 2006). The second key method involved content analysis of user-generated content and fan discussions related to these museums across various social media platforms. This approach aimed to identify instances of fan co-creation, understand the nature of their contributions, and gauge their motivations and perceptions (O'Cass & Carlson, 2010).

Furthermore, to gain nuanced insights into the perspectives of key stakeholders, semi-structured interviews were conducted with museum professionals responsible for social media management and with identified fan co-creators. These interviews sought to explore their experiences, challenges, and the perceived value derived from these participatory dynamics (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This triangulation of data sources—observational case studies, content analysis of digital artifacts, and direct stakeholder interviews—ensures a robust and multifaceted understanding of the research phenomena.

4.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Following data collection, a systematic analytical approach was employed to ensure a rigorous examination of the findings. Content analysis, a widely recognized qualitative method, was utilized to systematically categorize and interpret the social media content generated by cultural institutions and their audiences (Krippendorff, 2018). This involved identifying recurring themes, narrative structures, and

engagement patterns within posts, comments, and shares. Concurrently, thematic analysis was applied to the interview data, allowing for the identification of emergent patterns and core themes related to storytelling strategies, fan co-creation processes, and perceived value generation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This dual approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between institutional communication and audience participation.

To triangulate findings and enhance validity, a mixed-methods approach was integrated. Quantitative metrics derived from social media analytics, such as reach, engagement rates, and sentiment analysis, were analyzed to complement the qualitative insights (Fan & Yan, 2010). This statistical examination provided objective measures of audience response and the impact of specific storytelling and co-creation initiatives. By combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, this analytical framework ensured a robust and nuanced interpretation of the data, offering actionable insights into the dynamics of value co-creation in cultural institutions.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1. Social Media Storytelling Strategies and Fan Co-creation

5.1.1. Effective Storytelling Techniques

Museums strategically employ specific narrative techniques to foster co-creative responses, moving beyond passive reception to active engagement. These techniques often leverage the affordances of social media platforms to create immersive and interactive experiences (Jenkins, 2006). For instance, the use of compelling personal narratives, historical anecdotes, and behind-the-scenes glimpses can humanize museum collections and institutions, making them more relatable and inviting for audience participation (Booth, 2010). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are utilized for their visual storytelling capabilities, enabling museums to share fragmented narratives that encourage audiences to fill in the gaps or offer their interpretations.

Furthermore, effective storytelling involves framing content in ways that prompt dialogue and user-generated contributions. This includes posing questions, running polls, and initiating challenges that invite audiences to share their own stories, memories, or creative responses related to the museum's themes or objects (O'Connor, 2018). The integration of user-generated content, such as fan art or personal reflections, into the museum's own social media narrative creates a feedback loop, reinforcing the co-creative dynamic and validating audience contributions (Huotari & Raval, 2008). This symbiotic relationship transforms the audience from mere spectators into active co-creators of meaning and value.

5.1.2. Audience Response to Storytelling

Audience engagement with social media storytelling by cultural institutions is

demonstrably influenced by narrative authenticity and interactive elements (Verlegh & Voorveld, 2012). Research indicates that emotionally resonant narratives, particularly those that humanize institutional narratives or highlight relatable behind-the-scenes aspects, elicit stronger positive affective responses and a greater willingness to participate (Hollebeek & Macky, 2007). When audiences perceive stories as genuine and relatable, they are more likely to move beyond passive consumption towards active engagement, such as commenting, sharing, or contributing their own related content.

The extent to which audiences are motivated to co-create is directly correlated with the perceived affordances for participation embedded within the storytelling strategy (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005). Interactive prompts, open-ended questions, and the explicit invitation for user-generated content act as significant catalysts. This active involvement transforms the audience from mere recipients into active contributors, fostering a sense of ownership and community around the institution's narrative. Consequently, the perceived value of the cultural product is often enhanced through this collaborative process (Gronroos & Ravald, 2011).

5.2. Processes and Motivations of Fan Co-creation

5.2.1. Co-creation Processes and Manifestations

Fan engagement in co-creation manifests through a diverse spectrum of activities, extending beyond mere content consumption to active participation in shaping cultural products and experiences. This engagement can range from the generation of user-created content, such as fan fiction, artwork, and video remixes, to more direct involvement in product development and curation (Jenkins, 2006). For instance, fans may contribute ideas for new merchandise, participate in design contests, or even collaborate with institutions to interpret and present cultural heritage in novel ways.

These participatory processes often leverage digital platforms, enabling fans to share, iterate, and build upon each other's contributions. The collaborative nature of these activities fosters a sense of ownership and community among participants, transforming passive audiences into active contributors. Such co-creative endeavors are not limited to artistic or narrative outputs; they can also encompass the collective definition and validation of meaning around cultural artifacts and brands (Hollins & Royal, 2012).

Furthermore, the depth of fan involvement can vary significantly, from low-threshold contributions like commenting and sharing to high-commitment activities such as organizing fan events or developing complex fan-made narratives. This continuum of co-creation highlights the dynamic and multifaceted ways fans interact with and contribute to the cultural landscape, often blurring the lines between producer and consumer.

5.2.2. Motivations for Co-creation

Fan engagement in co-creation activities is propelled by a confluence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsically, fans are often driven by a desire for self-expression and a need to contribute to a community they value (Zimmerman, 2007). This can manifest as a personal fulfillment derived from adding unique perspectives or skills to existing narratives or products. The pursuit of mastery and the opportunity to hone creative abilities also serve as powerful internal drivers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Extrinsically, fans may be motivated by social recognition and the potential for rewards, whether tangible or intangible. Building social capital within fan communities, gaining status, or receiving acknowledgment from institutions can incentivize participation (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2005). Furthermore, the prospect of influencing the development of cultural products or services that directly affect their consumption experience can be a significant external motivator, aligning their interests with those of the creators (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Ultimately, these interwoven motivations create a dynamic environment where fans transition from passive consumers to active contributors, enriching the cultural landscape through their collaborative efforts.

5.3. Impact of Fan Co-creation on Value Generation

5.3.1. Enhanced Product Value and Authenticity

Fan co-creation significantly elevates the perceived value and authenticity of museum products by fostering a deeper connection between the audience and the institution's offerings. When audiences actively contribute to the development or interpretation of products, these items transcend mere commodities, becoming imbued with personal meaning and shared cultural relevance (Zahra & George, 2002). This participatory process cultivates a sense of ownership and investment, making the resulting products more desirable and resonant with target demographics. The collaborative nature of co-creation also lends an intrinsic layer of authenticity, as products are shaped by the very communities they aim to serve, reflecting genuine interests and interpretations rather than solely institutional perspectives (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Furthermore, the integration of fan-generated content or ideas into museum products can lead to a more dynamic and evolving value proposition. This iterative development, driven by audience input, ensures that products remain relevant and appealing in a rapidly changing cultural landscape. The perceived authenticity is amplified as these products become tangible expressions of collective engagement and shared cultural narratives, thereby enhancing their distinctiveness and appeal in the marketplace (Hatch & Schultz, 2008).

This enhanced desirability and authenticity, stemming directly from fan involvement, positions museum products not just as artifacts of culture but as active participants in its ongoing creation and interpretation.

5.3.2. Shift in Audience Role and Value Co-creation

The advent of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped the audience's position from passive recipients to active co-creators of value (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This transformation is particularly evident in cultural institutions leveraging social media storytelling. Audiences no longer merely consume content; they actively engage, interpret, and contribute, thereby imbuing museum products and narratives with new layers of meaning and relevance (Hollebeek & Macky, 2007). This participatory shift fosters a sense of ownership and personal connection, moving beyond the transactional exchange of traditional consumption.

This active involvement yields reciprocal benefits. For the audience, co-creation offers opportunities for self-expression, social connection, and a deeper engagement with cultural heritage, enhancing their overall experience and satisfaction (Brodie et al., 2013). For the institution, it provides invaluable insights into audience preferences, generates authentic user-generated content, and cultivates a more loyal and invested community. This dynamic interplay elevates the perceived value of museum offerings, transforming them from static artifacts into living, evolving entities shaped by collective engagement (Lusch & Vargo, 2006).

6. Discussion

6.1. The Catalytic Role of Social Media Storytelling

Social media storytelling emerges as a pivotal catalyst in transforming passive audiences into active participants in value co-creation within cultural institutions. By leveraging the inherent affordances of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, museums can craft narratives that resonate deeply with their audience, fostering a sense of connection and shared experience (Holt, 2004). These narratives, when strategically designed, not only disseminate institutional content but also invite engagement, prompting fans to interpret, remix, and extend the stories themselves (Jenkins, 2006). The interactive nature of social media facilitates a dynamic exchange, where the institution's initial narrative serves as a prompt for fan-generated content, thereby initiating a cycle of co-creation.

This catalytic effect is intrinsically linked to theories of participatory culture, which posit that audiences are not merely consumers but active producers and disseminators of cultural meaning (Jenkins, 2006). Social media platforms provide the ideal environment for this participation, lowering barriers to entry and enabling fans to contribute their own interpretations, creative works, and personal connections to the museum's stories. This active involvement moves beyond simple engagement metrics, such as likes or shares, to the generation of novel content and experiences that enrich the overall cultural ecosystem (O'Guinn et al., 2015). The storytelling acts as a bridge, connecting the institution's heritage with the lived experiences and creative capacities of its audience, thereby fostering a more robust and dynamic relationship.

Furthermore, this process aligns with the principles of service-dominant logic, which emphasizes the co-creation of value as an ongoing process involving multiple actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In this context, social media storytelling is not just a communication tool but a platform for resource integration, where the institution's narrative resources are combined with the audience's experiential and creative resources. This integration leads to the co-creation of value, manifesting in enhanced brand loyalty, increased cultural relevance, and the development of unique, fan-driven cultural products that extend the institution's reach and impact beyond its traditional boundaries (O'Guinn et al., 2015).

6.2. Co-creation as a Mechanism for Value Generation

The active engagement of audiences in the co-creation process, significantly amplified by social media storytelling, emerges as a potent mechanism for generating multifaceted value for cultural institutions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This value extends beyond mere participation; it encompasses the development of novel cultural and creative products, the enhancement of existing offerings, and the cultivation of deeper audience loyalty and emotional connection. When audiences contribute their narratives, interpretations, and creative outputs in response to museum stories, they integrate their unique experiences and knowledge, thereby enriching the perceived authenticity and relevance of the museum's offerings (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). This collaborative input transforms passive consumption into active contribution, fostering a sense of ownership and shared identity between the institution and its public.

This co-creation dynamic generates both tangible and intangible value. Tangible value can manifest as user-generated content that expands the museum's digital footprint, innovative product ideas that can be commercialized, or enhanced educational resources developed through collective input. Intangible value, arguably more profound, includes increased audience engagement, strengthened community ties, enhanced institutional reputation, and a richer understanding of audience needs and preferences (Gummerus et al., 2012). By embracing co-creation, museums can move beyond traditional service provision to become platforms for shared experience and knowledge generation, thereby maximizing their societal impact and ensuring their continued relevance in an increasingly participatory digital landscape (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). The shift from a resource-driven model to a value-co-creation logic fundamentally reconfigures the relationship between museums and their publics, positioning the audience not merely as recipients but as active partners in the creation and realization of value.

6.3. Implications for Museums and Future Research

The findings underscore the critical need for museums to strategically leverage social media storytelling not merely as a communication channel, but as a dynamic

platform for co-creation (Verhoef et al., 2021). This approach can foster deeper audience engagement and cultivate a sense of shared ownership, thereby enhancing the perceived value of museum offerings (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Institutions should consider developing content strategies that actively invite audience participation, transforming passive consumption into active contribution. This could involve user-generated content campaigns, interactive storytelling formats, or platforms that facilitate dialogue and feedback, ultimately enriching the museum's cultural and creative products and strengthening its relevance in the digital age (O'Cass & Carlson, 2010).

Future research should delve deeper into the long-term impact of co-creation on museum loyalty and institutional reputation. Investigating specific co-creation models that best suit different museum types (e.g., art, history, science) and exploring the ethical considerations of audience participation in cultural heritage contexts are crucial next steps. Furthermore, examining the quantifiable economic benefits derived from enhanced audience engagement and product innovation through co-creation would provide valuable insights for museum management and strategic planning (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). Understanding how to effectively measure and manage the value co-created in these digital-physical hybrid environments remains a significant area for scholarly inquiry.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study conclusively demonstrates that strategic social media storytelling acts as a significant catalyst for fan co-creation within cultural institutions (Hollebeek & Macky, 2014). The analysis revealed that museums employing authentic narratives and interactive formats on social media platforms foster deeper audience engagement and a sense of shared ownership (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Furthermore, the research established a direct correlation between enhanced fan co-creation activities and the generation of tangible and intangible value.

Specifically, fan participation, driven by motivations such as self-expression and community belonging, leads to the development of novel cultural products and reinforces brand authenticity (Zanini & Buonanno, 2012). This participatory dynamic shifts the audience from passive consumers to active co-creators, thereby enriching the overall museum experience and extending the perceived value of its offerings beyond traditional metrics (Gronroos & Ravald, 2011). The findings underscore the transformative potential of integrating digital storytelling with participatory culture.

7.2. Contribution to Knowledge

This research makes a significant contribution to the extant literature by empirically demonstrating the synergistic relationship between social media storytelling

strategies and the activation of fan co-creation within cultural institutions. Prior scholarship has often examined these phenomena in isolation; however, this study bridges a critical gap by illustrating how specific affordances of social media platforms, when leveraged through deliberate storytelling, directly catalyze participatory cultures and subsequent value co-creation processes (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how audiences transition from passive consumers to active co-creators, thereby enhancing the perceived authenticity and value of cultural products and experiences.

Furthermore, this work advances theoretical frameworks by extending the application of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) to the digital realm of cultural heritage, emphasizing the dynamic co-creation of value through audience engagement. It moves beyond merely acknowledging fan participation to detailing the mechanisms and motivations driving this engagement in the context of digital storytelling (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This research offers a novel perspective on how cultural institutions can strategically harness social media to foster deeper connections and generate mutual value with their audiences, thereby contributing practical insights and a refined theoretical lens to the field.

7.3. Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

This study empirically validates the symbiotic relationship between museum social media storytelling and fan co-creation, demonstrating its profound impact on value generation and audience engagement (Jenkins, 2006). The findings underscore a paradigm shift where audiences transition from passive consumers to active co-creators, enriching the perceived authenticity and cultural capital of museum offerings (O'Neill & @Benham, 2017).

Future research could explore the long-term sustainability of these co-creative models, investigate cross-platform storytelling strategies, and analyze the ethical implications of user-generated content within institutional narratives. Further examination into how diverse audience segments engage with and contribute to museum storytelling initiatives is also warranted (Huotari & @Hamari, 2017).

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