

# New Approaches to Museum Social Media Communication: Use of TikTok by Polish Museums

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## Abstract

Museum-oriented studies are closely connected to the broader environmental situation, like new social media platforms or audience characterization. This article explores the forms of activity and communication patterns made by Polish museums on TikTok. The study is based on qualitative and quantitative content analysis of social media posts. Results revealed that, although TikTok is still a novelty, institutions use this platform for various purposes. This platform is used not only by artistic museums but also by historical and military ones. Informal, humoristic communication tends to be dominant, yet TikTok is also used to educate users.

**Keywords:** communication, interactivity, museums, social media, TikTok

## Introduction

The presence of museums and their activity on social media have been explored for quite a long time (see for example: Marty 2008). However, since the COVID-19 pandemic when online communication became the only possible form for museum engagement, the importance of social media communication for museums has become an increasingly prevalent topic of discussion (Amanatidis et al. 2020; O'Hagan 2021; Sawczuk 2022).

The most popular social media platform for museums is Facebook (Capriotti and Losada-Diaz, 2018; Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021), with many institutions who are present on only one platform choosing to use Facebook over other social media sites. Research about museum social media use has also focused on YouTube, Twitter (e.g. Kydros and Vrana 2021), and Instagram (e.g. Rhee et al. 2021; Bosello and van den Haak 2022). However, there is yet to be much research attention focused on TikTok (Charlesworth et al. 2025), which is interesting when looking at the high popularity of that platform, especially among younger users (Dekhil and Sarnou 2021). This trend in social media activity could provide valuable information for museums which may face the challenge of communicating the value of heritage to new generations of audiences (Komarac and Ozretić Došen 2024). Hence, given the dynamics of social media - the rise and fall of various platforms and the growing popularity of TikTok, especially among younger users – this study aims to investigate how museums use TikTok in their social media communication. Considering the growing competitiveness within the wider cultural environment (Black 2020), museums have to learn the specifics of social media if they want to be an attractive and interesting entity for their audience.

The article is structured as follows: first, a theoretical overview discusses the changes and challenges of museums' social media participation and communication. This section also covers aspects of the specificity of selected social media platforms and general characteristics of TikTok, as well as the possibility of employing the platform in museums. The next part outlines the research methods of the study. Following this, the study's findings are presented and subsequently discussed. The article ends with the conclusions, limitations, and potential future research directions.

## Theoretical Background

### ***Museums Facing Changes in the Environment and the Importance of Social Media***

In the current dynamic digital landscape, there is no longer a question about whether museums should be on social media. Instead, the focus has shifted to how they should be active on these platforms to effectively communicate with their audience (O'Hagan 2021; Carignani et al. 2024). Preferences for specific social media platforms may differ among age groups (Auxier and Anderson 2021), yet using social media, in general, is one of the simplest ways to reach a broader audience. If museums aspire to be open and audience-oriented institutions (Villeneuve 2019), they must engage with their visitors through a variety of appropriate channels while tailoring their content to suit the needs and preferences of different groups. This raises challenges in terms of modifying museum roles, and ensuring the communication form and tone is suitable to the specificity of particular social media platforms (Carignani et al. 2024). On social media the changing relationship between museums and audiences is demonstrated: the museum is no longer the sole authority nor the only entity transmitting knowledge. On the contrary, social media users can participate in dialogues, address questions, or indicate mistakes made in posts (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). Such behavior is also consistent with the general characteristics of the current audience, who want to participate, be engaged in varied activities, or experience something (Black 2020). Hence, one-way communication without opening up to the audience will not be perceived as either sufficient or interesting.

### ***Museums' Approaches to Social Media Communication***

The form and tone of communication are particularly pertinent when considering the youngest segment of the audience (Gen Z and younger). However, it is important to mention that the audience, in general, is now more diverse and holds higher expectations that the content and experiences museums offer should be interesting, engaging, and of high quality (Black 2018). When communicating, especially with the younger generation (Komarac and Ozretić Došen 2024), it becomes essential not merely to emphasize the significance of museum collections but to vividly describe them and articulate their value in an engaging and comprehensible manner. While artifacts hold intrinsic value from the perspective of museum staff and historical witnesses, it is equally vital to transmit, share, and co-create value collaboratively with the audience. This new approach to communicating museum meaning is consistent with the concept that museums should not be about something but rather for somebody (Villeneuve 2019) – people being inside and outside the museums, and acknowledges the social role of museums (Preziosi and Farago 2019).

In the context of museums' social media activity, two forms of communication are mentioned: one-way and two-way interactive communication (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). Although the pandemic urged people to modify online communication, some authors noted that museums still tend to focus on one-way communication, omitting, to some extent, different forms of interactivity (Kydros and Vrana 2021; Bosello and van den Haak 2022). One-way communication refers to informational and promotional posts focusing on upcoming events or exhibitions. These posts are not oriented to initiate dialogue or engage the audience, but may still have an educational intention. Two-way communication patterns include quizzes, competitions, or open questions that are looking for the visitors' comments. Another communication pattern supporting interaction is a humorous approach, often identified in artistic museums (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020). Humorous posts are not so much about 'joking' in itself, but are content that presents museums and their collections less formally to minimize the distance between museums and their audiences (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020). Due to the diversity of social media these different interactive forms may overlap.

### ***TikTok's Potential for Museums***

Recent digital and social media reports note that TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms, especially among people aged 16-24, and also a platform where users

spend a lot of time.<sup>1</sup> This could be valuable information for museums, which face the challenge of communicating the value of heritage to the new generation in an attractive, engaging way. TikTok can also be an interesting platform for museums, as the research confirms its importance for both educational (e.g., Adnan et al., 2021; Anumanthan and Hassim, 2022) as well as entertainment purposes. However, the specificity of the TikTok platform – short and engaging videos – also brings challenges, connected to the risk of possible social media addiction.<sup>2</sup> Currently, there is limited research into the use of TikTok in a museum context. However, with the evolving dynamics of social media and technology, as well as the growing and changing expectations of museum visitors, such topics need to be continuously explored, as museums are not separated from external trends and changes.

### Research Methods

Given the dynamic of social media, the growing popularity of TikTok, especially among younger users, and the novelty of this area in museum studies, this study aimed to investigate how Polish museums use TikTok in their social media communication. Three research questions guiding the analysis were additionally formulated:

**RQ1.** How can Polish museums active on TikTok be characterized?

**RQ2.** What does their tendency to be active on TikTok look like, and how can it be explained?

**RQ3.** What patterns of interactive communication are employed by museums on TikTok?

Observations and the literature review revealed that museums' TikTok communication is rarely analyzed or monitored (Carignani et al. 2024; Charlesworth et al. 2025). Therefore, an exploratory study was conducted to realize the research aim. Specifically, an analysis of social media content was undertaken using both quantitative (how many museums and how many posts from each identified category) and qualitative (what type of message was presented in these posts) approaches, as well as conducting interviews for supplementary information.

The research sample was initially created by typing the keyword 'museum' into the TikTok search engine. In line with the study's assumptions and in order to ensure the study's clarity, only institutions from Poland and registered in any of the official databases (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage or National Institute of Museums) were included in the sample. Thus, organizations that were named as 'museums' but did not provide museum functions were not included in the further research steps. Moreover, institutions with empty profiles, lacking even one post, were also removed from the detailed investigation, as there was no source material to explore. Such a situation was observed in the case of three institutions.

After the first round of searching, the research sample was extended using a snowball technique and manual verification to identify any other institutions that were followers of previously identified museums or commented on their posts. Museums from the resulting research sample were then categorized according to their localization (voivodeships in Poland), organizational form (public, private, or co-owned, according to the Museums Act, and organizational profile (criteria from the Central Statistical Office reports).<sup>3</sup> As a result, 45 diverse institutions were included in the further analysis (table 1). Given the still existing novelty and rarity of TikTok in public museums in Poland (especially when compared to Facebook or Instagram), as well as the qualitative approach of the study, the size of this sample is justifiable.

Museum type	Museums with TikTok profile
<b>Museums in total</b>	45
<i>Ownership</i>	
- State-owned	9
- Regional-owned	20
- Private-owned	7
- Co-owned	9
Separate/main entity	40
Museum branch	5
<i>Thematic scope</i>	
- Historical	5
- Martyrdom	-
- Military	3
- Artistic	6
- Ethnographic and open-air	1
- Archeological	-
- Technology and Science	8
- Regional	7
- Biographical	3
- Other	1
- Interdisciplinary	11

*Table 1. Museums with TikTok accounts (source: own elaboration)*

Content from the identified museums' TikTok accounts was analyzed with reference to a previously established framework (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). This framework guided the analysis and served as a starting point for the coding process, conducted by one researcher. Due to TikTok's technical specificity - it is based on short videos - previously determined categories were not always applicable, and so modifications were made to the existing framework. Hence, no separate category 'videos and vlogs' was mentioned in this research. Thus, the selected interactivity components, which initially guided the content analysis, were responses and discussions, open questions, humorous posts, contests and competitions, and quizzes. In the case of TikTok, the responses or discussions have two forms: responses in the comments section or separate video material as an answer to a specific comment. For research purposes, the second form was especially considered, as it provides the space for interactivity not previously observed. The analysis also included the component of celebrity and influencer engagement and crowdsourcing or crowdfunding initiatives (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). As the research design includes an overall analysis of museums' social media communication on TikTok, the list of social media messages was more exhaustive and also included less interactive content components like information dissemination, invitations to the museum and specific exhibitions, and overall museum presentations or event announcements (table 2). These categories emerged during the analysis and were included in the study due to the previous observations that even non-interactive content may start discussions (Sawczuk 2023) or initiate engagement.

Type of message	Number of institutions applying this form of communication	Number of messages
<i>ALL MESSAGES</i>	<b>809</b>	
Humoristic approach	30	139
Educational content and info dissemination	20	127
Invitation to the museum and specific exhibitions	38	124
Open questions	25	82
Overall presentation and museum backstage	18	81
Relations from events and projects	26	67
Presenting museum collections	12	54
Event and projects announcements	11	34
Celebrity or artist engagement	6	32
Anniversaries and special occasions	8	25
Info beyond core activities	7	19
Contests, competitions, and quizzes	5	12
Responses and discussions	5	11
Crowdsourcing	2	2

*Table 2. Types and number of messages identified in the study (source: own elaboration)*

Data was collected manually in two rounds from May to November 2023. The first round took place from May to August and the second from October to November 2023. Double-checking social media accounts was important, especially given the dynamics of TikTok trends or varied viral activities. In cases when museums' TikTok activities were neither frequent nor regular, the older posts were considered in the analysis (from 2022 or even older). However, the overall aim was to collect around ten posts from each institution to examine how they tended to use TikTok. Data was collected from each museum separately and then examined together to analyze and verify the dominant approach of social media usage. A short time later after the data collection and analysis (January-February 2024), two interviews with museum employees responsible for museum promotion or managing specific social media platforms were conducted to gather additional information. As part of the preparation for the interview, the TikTok accounts of specific museums were checked once again. The institutions chosen for these interviews were purposively selected, due to their general range and rather big popularity, as well as regular and consistent activity on TikTok. Hence, they were able to provide information or explanations regarding the varied regularity of posting or tendencies to communicate in a specific way. After obtaining the consent from the interviewees, interviews were recorded, then transcribed and coded.

## Results

### *The General Structure of Museums Active on TikTok*

Museums on TikTok differ in range, organizational form, and thematic profiles. There are renowned public institutions (e.g., the National Museum in Warsaw or the Museum of the History of Polish Jews Polin) as well as more minor, private museums (like the Museum of Military Equipment in Mrągowo or the 'Polish Roads' Museum in Modliszewice). Five of the identified institutions are museum branches, and activity on TikTok can be a good way to promote institutions and build brand awareness even before their opening, as in the case

of two of the entities (Museum of the History of Poland and Museum of Warsaw Ghetto). However, regionally-owned museums create the most comprehensive group when looking at the organizational form. The in-depth analysis of TikTok activity revealed that the institution's range does not determine the willingness or regularity of social media posting. For example, the Krakow Museum last posted on 16 June 2023, while private institutions such as the Automotive Museum Wena or the Museum of Military Equipment in Mrągowo tended to more regularly post interactive content.

Findings also revealed that institutions represent a variety of profiles (tab.1): artistic, historic (topics related to World War II and martyrdom aspects), biographical, regional, military, and technical. The interdisciplinary, regional, and technology and science museums form the leading group of institutions, followed by the artistic museums. On the other hand, there is no open-air museum, and only one is classified as 'ethnographic' (the Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw). Moreover, although there is no museum strictly defined as 'archaeological', Podlaskie Museum in Białystok closely refers in their posts to the work of its Archaeological Department, e.g.:

'Fascinating archaeological discoveries in Tykocin! Our museum archaeologists are currently conducting excavations at November 11 Street. The aim of the expedition is to identify the area of future technical investment related to rainwater and sewage infrastructure.(...)'<sup>4</sup>

High discrepancies were observed while analyzing the tendency of museums to be active on TikTok. Three groups of museums can be identified: museums systematically posting (e.g., the Museum of Polish Song in Opole, the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, or the Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN in Warsaw), institutions posting occasionally or unsystematically (e.g., the Witold Gombrowicz Museum; the Museum of Military Technique in Zabrze; and the Museum of Polish History in Warsaw), and those museums that have not been active on their accounts for a long time, like the National Museum of Agriculture and the Agro-Food Industry in Szreniawa (the first and last post in February 2023), the Museum of the City of Zgierz (the first and the last post on 18 May 2022), or the Museum of Warsaw (last post in December 2022).

### ***The General Motivation Towards Being Active on TikTok***

Apart from the general characterization of the museums active on TikTok, an important issue concerns general motivation and factors driving the decision to be active on this platform. Hence, museums decide to initiate activity on this platform for different reasons. Motivations can be different, but one of them is to reach out to the younger audience, as identified by one of the museum employees interviewed:

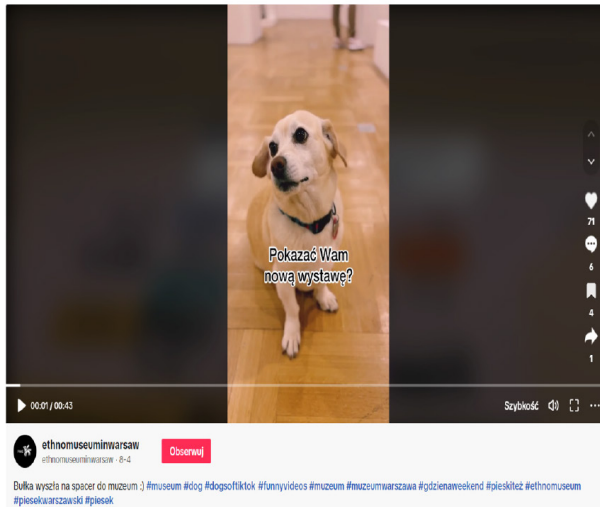
We consciously made the decision and thought about it for a long time. On the one hand, this is a very difficult channel for us when it comes to content planning and presence in general, but on the other hand, it is very important because we want to reach a slightly younger audience than our standard one (Warsaw Museum Employee).<sup>5</sup>

### ***Communication Patterns Applied in Explored Museums***

As well as highlighting the diversity of the institutions using TikTok, and their different posting frequencies, results also revealed various employed communication patterns. The application of a humoristic approach emerged as the dominant one (tab.2), yet institutions mainly applied a combination of communication patterns. Hence, the humoristic approach was combined with educational content, open questions, or a presentation of the museum backstage. For example, the Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw titled its post from the 14th of April, 2023 'What do the employees of PME do, when the director is not at the museum?'<sup>6</sup> It was a combination of a humoristic approach, posting open questions, and presenting a variety of places in the museum. On the other hand, the POLIN Museum had a series of videos in which employees

were asked about their favorite places in the museum. In one post, a vending machine was mentioned. As background music, a theme similar to that from the film *Titanic* was used.<sup>7</sup> However, using different communication approaches seems to be challenging in terms of how to obtain the right balance between being appropriate and responsible and being more informal. As one Museum Employee stated: 'we often wonder how to create content that will be funny, but which will not cross any boundaries'.<sup>8</sup>

The approach to content creation also includes a combination of humorous content and the invitation to specific exhibitions or museums as a whole. The presence of animals enhances users' engagement and interest in the post, even if the content is non-interactive. This was visible among others in the case of the Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw (fig.1).



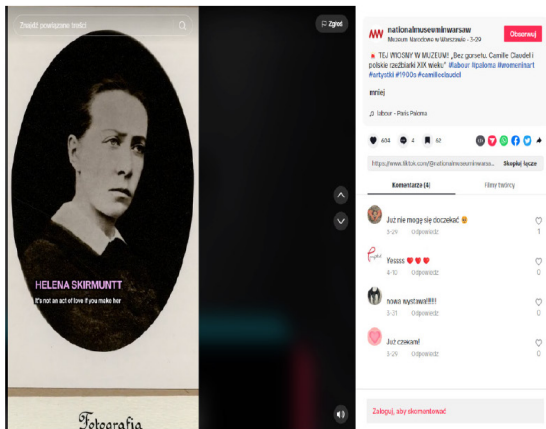
Show you a new exhibition?

Description: Bulka was going off for a walk around the museum :)

Figure 1. Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, 4th of August 2023, 900 views, 71 likes, and 7 comments.

In this video (fig. 1), a dog is the museum exhibition guide. This animal can be identified in more social media content from this museum. The TikTok from 13 September 2022 is one of the most popular on the museum profile with more than 52 thousand views, 8818 likes, and 195 comments.<sup>9</sup> It presents the museum as a friendly space for animals and promotes the campaign 'Doggies too', which aims to show that it is possible to visit the museum with a dog. The music used in the background is the viral *Can We Skip to the Good Part?* (more than 600 thousand videos with this sound), used mainly for travel-related content or to present long-awaited events and situations.

Therefore, the data analysis revealed that sometimes even more non-interactive communication patterns, like, for example, the overall presentation of a museum or informational post, may start a discussion or user engagement (e.g., the National Museum in Warsaw's TikTok from 20 June 2023 informing about events related to the 185th anniversary of Jan Matejko's birth: 970 likes, six comments, and more than 60 thousand views).<sup>10</sup> The inclusion of the appropriate, viral background music (fig.2) also supports a higher level of interest, as in the case of the National Museum in Warsaw's TikTok from 29 March 2023 about its new exhibition which uses the viral song *Labor*.<sup>11</sup>



THIS SPRING IN MUSEUM!  
"Corsets off. Camille Claudel and  
Polish Women Sculptors of the  
19th Century"

Figure 2. National Museum in Warsaw, 29th of March, 2023.

### **Humoristic Approach and Virals on Museums' TikTok Profiles**

From an overall perspective, the humoristic approach helps present the museum and its artifacts or museum employees in a more informal and 'user-friendly' way. It is especially achieved by using varied trends and viral sounds to create a non-obvious message. Museums apply Polish-language viral sounds as well as English ones, among which are:

- 'Hi Barbie' from the Barbie movie - sound used in more than 240,000 videos (e.g. National Museum in Warsaw's post from 21 July 2023 presenting their new exhibition and exhibition-related gadgets, 389 likes and 3 comments<sup>12</sup>);
- 'Wes Anderson' – trend in which museums are stylized as if they were in a particular movie director's style, sound used in more than 24,000 videos (e.g. the Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw's post from 2 May 2023, 75 likes and 7 comments<sup>13</sup>; the Museum of the Chełmińska Land's post from 17 June 2023, 36 likes<sup>14</sup>);
- 'Everybody told me that I sound like CG5', sound used in 86,000 videos (e.g. the National Museum in Warsaw's post from 14 March 2023, 3055 likes and 4 comments<sup>15</sup>; the Craft Museum in Krosno's post from 20 April 2023, 15 likes<sup>16</sup>).

Viral trends and sounds can be an interesting source of inspiration for creating content. However, museums may sometimes decide not to use such trends or sounds, as this can be unsuitable for the specificity of the organization. This was noted by the Museum Employees interviewed:

Very often, even though we are up to date with TikTok trends and we also have someone who knows about it, we consciously decide not to use all trends or all real-time marketing videos. We don't always want to because when we publish content on TikTok, we check the content of songs used in these trends. (...) I think that creating content on TikTok is so difficult because you have to take into account so many different contexts (Warsaw Museum Employee).<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes, I use trends. Unfortunately, they don't always work out and my experience is that our algorithm only works on historical TikToks - especially from World War II. These videos are the most popular and always have the most likes and comments. Trends – rarely. They have many likes, but I have the

impression that their viewership stops at some point. After two days, nothing happens (Trójmiasto Museum Employee).<sup>18</sup>

### **Museums Educating on TikTok**

Although museums can effectively engage an audience through humor and a 'light touch' (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk, 2020) and maintain interactive communication, that is not the only way. The educational approach is realized in many different ways; one of which is posting videos with 'curiosities', like a new collection of photos, addressing questions to the audience, and then answering them in discussion or in a new post. This is the case with the Emigration Museum in Gdynia which, for example, posted a video on 31 May 2023 with the comment:

*More than 600 photographs of Polish immigrants in the USA, Americans of Polish descent and Poles visiting the United States recently came into our collection. The oldest of the pictures were taken in the 20s (...). We have chosen a few pictures for you. (...) Please let us know which photograph you'd like to hear more about!*<sup>19</sup>

Under this video, there are comments like:

- 'family 2+3 with the doggie in the background and the wooden house' – the museum replied directly under this comment
- 'the lady on crutches is intriguing me' – under this comment, two other people posted the same reflection and the museum created a video directly responding to this a day later (1 June 2023).<sup>20</sup>

This institution applies the two-way approach to responding to comments: directly in the comments section or by creating a separate video in the answer. This kind of approach is less popular (tab.2), however, museums decided to use this way of engaging communication both for educational or humorous purposes (e.g., the Museum of Military Equipment in Mrągowo's post from 12 July 2023;<sup>21</sup> the Museum of Technology and Transport in Szczecin's post from 2 August 2023.<sup>22</sup>)

### **Education on TikTok: Important Dates and Witnesses of History**

Another form of educational content is creating educational videos about important dates from history or people who witnessed the history. As one museum employee said:

We show here that TikTok is such a great educational tool for us, that it is not just some stupid videos, but that you can find content that can be useful at school. This is content presented in a rather light way (...) So we also try to show on TikTok that history can be shown in a different way (Trójmiasto Museum Employee).<sup>23</sup>

The museum that used this kind of communication more seriously was the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, which uploaded videos summarizing historical moments, with special reference to 1943 when the Warsaw Ghetto uprising broke out. The video from the 19 April 2023 (the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) has around 47,000 views, 484 likes, and eight comments.<sup>24</sup> One person discussed the appropriateness of using TikTok to communicate this type of message, yet the museum addressed its point of view:

S: I would consider choosing music and a communication channel for such a serious topic

WGM: *This platform allows us to communicate this important story effectively*

3[...]: *Considering that this channel is also used to convey other serious information (Iran, Ukraine, but also social), it is the right one.*

This was the only sign of doubt, as under other posts are rather comments like 'I always wonder

*why such educational videos have so few views and pathology has the most...*' or discussions between users.<sup>25</sup> The museum also used communication forms such as quizzes or open questions. However, they were always closely connected to their area of specialization (e.g., post from 14 May 2023 featuring a 'mini-quiz: which of these people led the ŻZW?').<sup>26</sup> From an overall perspective, competitions and quizzes were not the most common communication form in comparison to open questions.

### **Other Communication Patterns**

Celebrities were engaged, amongst others, to promote the museum or to invite the public to varied museum initiatives (e.g. the Warsaw Uprising Museum's post from 12 April 2023).<sup>27</sup> A similar situation concerns crowdsourcing or artists' engagement and anniversaries and special occasions regarding historical dates and museum jubilees (e.g. the National Museum in Wrocław and a series of posts with 'birthday wishes').<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the case of this particular National Museum revealed that posting due to the jubilees can be combined with influencer/artist engagement (post from 23 July 2023 where a fashion influencer participated in the museum's jubilee video).<sup>29</sup> However, the number of institutions and posts referring to the celebrities' and artists' engagement may reveal that this form of communication is rather more supportive than fundamental. A small group of institutions also posted content beyond their core area of specialization. However, compared with the educational content or an invitation to the museum initiatives, this can be seen as an additional pattern of communication rather than a core approach.

### **Discussion**

Museums in the study decided to use TikTok generally as a third channel of communication, rather than as a main basis for communication, as is the case with Facebook or Instagram (e.g. Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021; Sawczuk 2023). Hence, despite TikTok's popularity, it is still perceived as a form of experiment in cultural institutions. This is highlighted by the fact that only 45 institutions registered in databases use this channel of communication, despite there being more than 900 museums in Poland.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, there were accounts identified on which, after one or some posts, activity disappeared, yet this may be an issue of lacking enough resources (see: Carignani et al. 2024) to fully and professionally manage social media activity.

Among the museums studied, there was a diversity in terms of their profile. What is interesting is the fact that no open-air museum was identified in the research sample. Moreover, museums thematically situated within areas of military and technology apply more informal communication patterns, which is a different observation from previous studies (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). Noting that content featuring animals attracts user attention and interest (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020; Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021), and that open-air museums communicate by presenting different animals living in their museum areas, TikTok communication could have potential in these institutions.

As observed and confirmed in the study, the approach to TikTok communication depends on the type of museum (Booth et al. 2020). However, there was no situation in which content was perceived as inappropriate or unethical, and varied tendencies in the main communication approaches were observed. In the martyrdom or historical museum, it was more about education. In contrast, whilst artistic museums also create educational content (e.g., virtual sightseeing; comments from the exhibition curator), in these museums, there is a greater tendency to use a humorous approach or viral trends such as the *Barbie* movie or Eurovision. Some of those trends clearly refer to real-time marketing (see: Willemssen et al. 2018). However, even humoristic and more informal content may have educational value, confirming the previous observation that specific communication patterns are merged with each other (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). Nevertheless, open questions and informal ways of communication tend to be the overall dominant communication approach.

Although it can be confirmed that museums currently use TikTok only occasionally (Charlesworth et al. 2025), it is a suitable option available to very diverse types of institutions, both in terms of range and profile. With the appropriate type of content, TikTok can be a good

way to promote the museum and strengthen relations with the audience. The comments on TikTok were also positive in terms of selecting this social media channel (with one exception, noticed in the profile of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum). Hence, with a deliberate strategy of communication and regularity of posting, TikTok can be an appropriate place to enhance interactive communication. Museums rather tend to respond directly to user comments, but an interesting option is creating videos in response (e.g. the Museum of Emigration in Gdynia). As other users clearly see that the institution posted a video in response, there is a sign and probably a better chance of further engagement and discussion. In general, high responsiveness is one of the crucial elements encouraging audience participation (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021), even if the presented form of the content is rather non-interactive and 'more traditional'. This was observed in the study, for example, in the case of videos with sightseeing tours and descriptions of specific, technical exhibits (e.g. The Railway Museum in Jaworzyna Śląska).

## Conclusions

The study investigated museums' communication on TikTok based on Polish institutions. Although the research sample was not large, it allowed for the evaluation and characterization of the activity tendencies on this platform and the form of communication employed. The findings revealed that, with the appropriate approach to TikTok, even smaller institutions might successfully use this platform. Although the available resources may affect how social media communication looks, there is space not only for more significant and renowned institutions. Creativity and a willingness to discuss with the audience seem to be the most relevant factors, as few larger museums systematically post on TikTok. While looking at the patterns of interactive communication, employing a humorous and informal approach is the form that is especially popular and gaining attention. The second form is educational content, which is often delivered in the style of humor and open questions. Moreover, discussions and responding to comments are important.

Although the study tried to look at the TikTok museums' communication comprehensively, it also has limitations. As the social media landscape is very dynamic, it can be valuable to repeat this research in the future to look at how communication patterns and the popularity of TikTok have changed. It would also be valuable to look at a smaller group of institutions to compare how they communicate across all social media platforms. Moreover, including foreign institutions to look for good practices would be interesting, as relations in the virtual and real spheres are blurring.

## Notes

- 1 Simon Kemp, 'Digital 2023: Global Overview Report', Datareportal 2023. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report>, accessed 18 August 2023.
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