PicturePerfect
Exploring Self-Presentation And Social Dynamics Through Photo Taking And Sharing At Art Museums
AGENDA

Motivation

Method

Findings

Recommendations
Our original hypothesis was that people were intimidated by art museums because the information was multi-modal, required expertise, and great in volume.

Through observations, we found that art appreciation and information processing are mediated, very frequently, by phone cameras and looking down at screens.
How do photo-taking and photo-sharing behaviors manifest and shape the experiences at art museums both during and after the visit?

- Engagement and interactions with photos and posts from an art museum visit
- Characteristics and impact of visitor-generated content
- Mediation of social media tools during visit

How can museums better attract and serve visitors?
## Research Methods

### Observation Study
- Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
- Focused on visitor navigation and appreciation
- Noticed heavy usage of mobile devices

### Instagram Analysis
- **4 museums** in the Bay Area; **100** public IG posts each
- 2 independent coders; multiple code refinements
- Codes focus on **social and art** interactions/discussions

### User Interviews
- **12 participants**: Berkeley affiliates and the public
- Motivations for museum visits and photo taking/sharing
- Applied **ground theory** on transcriptions
Method

**Instagram Analysis**

- **4 museums** in the Bay Area; **100 public IG posts each**

- **Zeeschuimer** (open-source firefox extension) ---> Public posts in late March/early April ---> .ndjson file ---> .csv

- Filtered and removed certain accounts e.g., Museums’ official accounts and posts consisting of wedding photos
**Method**

**Instagram Analysis**

- **2 independent coders; multiple code refinements**

- **Adjusting**: We changed several codes into **True/False tags** for simpler aggregations

- **Merging**: `hash_community` and `hash_other` --> `hash_other`

- **Splitting**: `inform_emotion` --> `reflect_detailed` and `reflect_generic`

- **Adding**: `artsy_profile`

- **Removing**: `art_medium`
Method

**Instagram Analysis**

- Codes focus on **social and art** interactions/discussions

  - Indicate **whether artwork is present** and in which engagement model
  - Detail the **components** of the photograph such as environment
  - Classify identification and interactions in the **comments and hashtags**
  - Identify **social dynamics** present in the photo and text interactions
Method

Semi-Structured Interviews

- **12 participants**: Berkeley affiliates and the public

1. **Screening survey**
   - Art museum goers
   - Have taken photos and shared them on social media

2. **Participants selection**
   - A range of experiences with art, art history, and art museums
   - A range of preferences for social media photo-sharing

3. **Interviews**
   - 11 interviews conducted over Zoom
   - ~ 60 min each; 1 interviewer and 1-3 note-takers
Semi-Structured Interviews

- Motivations for museum visits and photo taking/sharing

- **Warm-Up**: Can you tell me about your experiences with art museums?
- **Critical Incidence**: Tell us about the last time you took a photo at an art museum
- **Photo-Taking**: What are some examples of Instagram-worthy photos/moments?
- **Perspectives**: How do you think photo-sharing enhance or diminish your in-person experiences?
FINDINGS
In-Person Experience

Preparation

Navigation

Identity Management
Preparation
Navigation

- Queuing up for photo
- More time taking photo
- Setup conducive to photography
### Findings

**“Instagrammable”**

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<tr>
<th>No. of posts analyzed for SFMOMA</th>
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Identity Management

Findings

‘Look at me, I’m so cultured because I go to a museum and look at exhibitions.’
-- Frequent Visitor (28) on why they post

I have a lot of friends who are from very rich background... They think they have good taste so if I want to join them, I’m supposed to have good taste of art.
-- Visitor (26) on why “taste” is important

when I was younger, I thought the act of going to the art museum was a very adult activity. This adult has their life together. Very cultured, well-rounded person. There is an element of “pretending”
-- Visitor (24) on why they dress up
Identity Management

Taste

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-- Visitor (24) on why they dress up
Identity Management

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Status

-- Visitor (24) on why they dress up
Identity Management

Findings

Taste

Status

Sophistication
Online Experience

Limited Public Discussion on Art

Context Collapse

Invisible Art Lover Community
Limited Public Discussion On Art

Posts with:

- Exhibition description: 37%
- Artwork description: 16%
- Detailed reflection: 11%
- Generic reflection: 18%

Example posts:
- calcultured
  - Legion of Honor Museum
- calcultured
  - Blue and white is my thing
  - #birthdaygirl #ootd #tbt #museumtrip
  - 1d
Limited Public Discussion On Art

Posts with a comment section that involves:

- Author’s response: 17%
- Art discussion: 11%
- Non-art discussion: 35%
Context Collapse

The flattening of different audiences into one context

I am a lot more aware of the kind of personal content I post. I have a lot of **people watching my life** that I don't really engage with.

-- Visitor (24) on posting personal reflection on art

Regarding art, 80% of my followers probably **won’t understand** what I write in a caption. I feel stupid sharing it on social media with all my followers.

-- Visitor (26) on posting personal reflection on art
Invisible Community Of Art Lovers

- Content recommendation algorithm
- Indirect social exchange
- One-to-many communication channel
- No direct contact or reciprocity
Invisible Community Of Art Lovers

Posts with:

- Hashtags: 38%
- Location hashtags: 25%
- Art-related hashtags: 23%
- Other hashtags: 21%
1. Social Norm

Photo-Taking is against the social norms making it difficult to take pictures although it is important to visitor’s art museum experience.
1. Instagrammable Zone
2. Context Collapse

Art museum visitors feel “cringy” to share their reflections publicly due to context collapse.
2. Stories & Hashtags

- Build online engagement with Instagram Story Challenges.

- Use hashtag to contribute to “Information based public goods.”
THANK YOU
Scan The QR Code To Enjoy A Parody Of Our Observations!

#CalCultured #Taste #Classy

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