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## **Viral challenges as a new form of museums' activity in social media**

### **Introduction**

Social media, due to its diversity and interactivity, can be effectively used both for formal and informal purposes. Apart from the business or marketing context, it is a space for discussing social either political issues. Thus, considering the mentioned interactivity, social media can be used to communicate with multiple stakeholders and affect public politics (Guo and Saxton 2014). Together with the growing popularity, a high number of social media sites used can be observed, and in turn, a huge amount of created content. In such competitiveness, the way of presentation and how emotions are transmitted in the message gain special relevance (Pressgrove, McKeever and Jang 2018). Those two points can be fulfilled by creating viral content and viral challenges (Burgess, Miller and Moore 2018). Differing by the purpose and logic assumed, such activities can integrate a variety of entities, including museums as well.

While discussing museums, being “audience-oriented” is one of the often addressed issues (Winter 2018; Black 2018). Hence, social media with its characteristics may help in the practical realization of this approach. Nevertheless, although it is noticed that two-way communication is essential (Shaharir and Zanuddin 2018; Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020) if the museum wants to present itself as an institution attractive to the contemporary visitor, at the same time the full social media potential is not used (Lotina 2014; Kydros and Vrana 2021). Hence, very often it can be observed that social media is used as an informational and promotional channel, where upcoming events are announced. It reflects more one-way communication, while two-way is represented, for example, by quizzes, comments, asking questions, discussions, or competitions. There is some general scope of possible options, while the specific approach depends on the museum type. The offer is addressed mainly toward individual visitors, yet the pandemic time revealed the broadening of the social media audience, as also forms of interactivity conducted. When the possibility

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of on-site interaction with visitors was strictly limited, museums tried to stay in contact with the environment in different ways, also by participating in viral challenges. Hence, this article aims to identify and analyze the museums' activity partaken in social media viral challenges. The article is structured in the following way. First, the overall intensity and importance of social media usage are discussed. After that, social media in museums' context is presented: what is its specificity and for what purposes social media can be used. Afterward, the research gaps and research purpose are specified. The next elements of the article comprise presenting the assumed research method and the findings obtained. The discussion section follows the presentation of the results. The article is ended with the conclusion, including the indication of the research limitations and possible future research directions.

## Theoretical background

The growth of social media is observed both in terms of social media users on a particular platforms and the creation of new social media sites.<sup>2</sup> Together with the proliferation of practical applications, varied definitions and classifications may be noticed, including the definition made by Kaplan and Haenlein (Aichner, Grünfelder, Maurer and Jegeni 2021). This definition from 2010, is as follows: "Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). This publication with the above-presented definition is one of the most often cited, as for 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2021, this article reached 23.437 citations in Google Scholar. Additional characteristics points out that social media specificity can be included in several dimensions: participation, openness, dialogue, community, and interconnectedness (Phing and Yazdanifard 2014).

Apart from the diverse definitions, also a variety of classifications exist, which represent what functions social media has and to what purposes it can be used (e.g. Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; McMillen and Alter 2017). Therefore, social media is appropriate to use both in formal and informal contexts: in the case of informal social relations, while discussing business or marketing areas (e.g. Kim, Kim and Sung 2014), as also for promoting donating activities (Pressgrove et al. 2018). The social aspect, within which activities are disseminated and different groups are involved (e.g. Saxton and Waters 2014; McMillen and Alter 2017), seems to have special importance. Such diversity is related to the social media characteristics, like high interactivity and decentralized structure, thanks to which social media can be successfully used to communicate with different stakeholders and to affect public policy (Guo and Saxton 2014).

With the growing number of social media users and with new social media sites, the patterns of social media activity are changed as well. Hence, because of the increasing number of social media users resulting in the growing competition (e.g. Roman, Manolică and Bîtcă 2018), a standardized method of disseminating the information might be not enough. While having such plentiful social media content, leading even to being overloaded (Fu, Li, Liu, Pirkkalainen and Salo 2020), not each

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media> (accessed: 22.07.2021).

message will be noticed, read or shared. Therefore, the way of attractive content presentation, which brings meaning and includes emotional aspect, has to be taken into consideration (Pressgrove et al. 2018). With such a characteristic, which looks at the emotional elements of the message, the viral content and "viral social media challenges" are associated. It is a new form of activity, which started around 2014 with the "Ice Bucket Challenge" (Burgess et al. 2018). The main idea of viral content is to share them with the biggest audience possible. Depending on which emotions are included in the message, then the virality may be positive or negative. It is noticed that content connected to admiration, anger or anxiety can be more viral than those related, for example, to sadness (Berger and Milkman 2012). Nevertheless, this issue requires a more intense exploration. Viral challenges are similar to viral content, as they can be broadly spread as viral videos, yet the difference regards the level of creativity. In the challenge, each participant may create their own version of the first idea and develop it. Further, it is based on the direct or indirect nomination of the next people (Burgess et al. 2018). It was mentioned that the first viral challenge is dated around 2014 (Burgess et al. 2018) yet with such a fast pace of developing ideas in social media, since this time users have the possibility to participate in varied challenges, diversified by topic and purpose. Diversity of challenges gives a possibility to look both at the positive and negative aspects of social media activity.

The discussion about positivity, negativity, and ethics may regard social media as a whole, as also specific challenges or phenomena observed on those sites. While discussing ethics, aspects of copyrights may be addressed, as well as the selection of the content and the way in which it is presented. Deliberated and appropriate selection of the material seems to be especially relevant for museums and heritage sites (e.g. Wong 2011). Slacktivism can be noted among the phenomena which are not strictly positive or negative. Moreover, to some extent, it has similarities with viral challenges. Slacktivism is described as a little relevant online activity, like sharing or liking posts, that is conducted more to improve the feel better of social media users than real affecting the social or political situation. It is also mentioned that engaging in online activities will minimize the actually offline action (Kwak, Lane, Weeks, Kim, Lee and Bachleda 2018). Nevertheless, in practice, situation can be more diversified, and online activism can be complementary to the offline one (Sawczuk 2020).

Another area of ethics in social media regards the viral challenge itself. It might be conducted for the socially approved purpose, but at the same time, some tasks are controversial, because of the risk of being hurtful (Burgess et al. 2018) or causing health consequences. Some challenges raised very sensitive issues, like, for example, "Holocaust challenge."<sup>3</sup> There are also sources that provide information about which challenges may be dangerous, especially for the young generation.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, not all of them have a detrimental purpose, as such initiatives are also conducted to reinforce somebody in material or mental ways. Apart from supporting financially, the issue of mental support emerged as important, especially during

<sup>3</sup> <https://nowymarketing.pl/a/28292,tiktokerzy-udaja-ofiary-holokaustu-w-rach-nowego-trendu-holokaustchallenge> (accessed: 26.07.2021).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Dangerous-Internet-Challenges.aspx> (accessed: 29.07.2021).

the pandemic's lockdown time.<sup>5</sup> Some of the challenges are conducted on a smaller scale, while the others can be described as really trending ones. Hence, sometimes even with a good purpose, there might be a risk of missing or forgetting the initial charitable and help-oriented ideas (Burgess et al. 2018). As social media are a very dynamic environment, it can be hard to predict in which direction this activity will evolve. Although viral challenges are becoming more popular, especially during the lockdown times, it is mainly noted about individuals' participation, while organizations also started to partake in such activities. That is broadening the area of analysis and observable differences regarding what organizations are active in challenges. Since March 2020, museums have applied different approaches to social media activity and user participation.

While discussing museums, social media sites with their specificity as a place for interaction and discussion are tools helpful in the practical implementation of the "audience/ visitor-oriented" museum (e.g. DesRoches 2015; Skydsgaard, Møller Andersen and King 2016; Black 2018), which is a change expected also by the audience (Brown Jarreau, Smith Dahmen and Jones 2019). Such an approach receives gradually more research attention as a relevant solution in time of the enormous challenges facing museums. All observable changes are connected to the political and economic conditions, which affect museums' position. As such, museums have to be more inclusive and open to society (e.g. McMillen and Alter 2017; Black 2018), whilst the frequency of visits confirms that this institution is perceived as a popular and interesting place. As museums have to observe trends and situations in the environment, the necessity of social media presence is gradually more crucial, also for ensuring museum recognizability.

Although the application of social media to the museum context is recognized for more than a decade, specific forms have evolved over time. Hence, in the earlier works, usage of blogs, Flickr, or YouTube was mentioned (e.g. López, Margapoti, Maragliano and Bove 2010), while later – activity on Twitter, Instagram and even TikTok started to be discussed (e.g. Brown Jarreau et al. 2019; Przybysz and Knecht 2020; Rhee, Pianzola and Choi 2021). Apart from the channels used, the relevant issue regards how social media are used by the museums. In discussing this, in the literature it is noted that museums do not use the full potential lying in social media (e.g. Kidd 2011; Lotina 2014; Kydros and Vrana 2021). Although the promotional aspect is of importance, museums should have to look at and try other ways of activity. The two-way communication and engagement in the dialogue with the audience show that museums are not institutions separated from their public (Shaharir and Zanuddin 2018). Hence, it is a challenge to contemporary museums, on how to be in contact with the audience, having in mind the general issue of environmental competitiveness.

In social media specificity, museums do not have a monopoly on knowledge (Evrard and Krebs 2018) and the multiplicity of narration is emerging. Despite this challenging situation, museums apply varied interactivity forms, such as open

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<sup>5</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-globally/year-ender-2020-viral-social-media-challenges-7120040/> (accessed: 29.07.2021).

questions, dialogues, quizzes, crowdsourcing initiatives, competitions, or messages written in a humorous style (e.g. Fletcher and Lee 2012; Baker 2017; Kim 2018; Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020). Even if they are not always dominating, they are implemented according to the museums' profile thanks to which reactions are rather good. This form of communication may gradually gain higher importance, also due to the pandemic situation. During the lockdown, social media were the only platform to communicate with the audience, which implies new forms of activity. While the main focus is around individual visitors, museums can communicate with other organizations as well. Quite interesting is the issue of participation in viral social media challenges, which was partaken by some museums since March 2020. The content virality, in general, is noticed as an important, yet not fully explored issue (Berger and Milkman 2012), which makes this article address the gaps in such area. Moreover, due to the growing popularity of diverse social media accounts and the intensification of social media usage by museums, this article aims to identify and analyze the museums' activity in "social media challenges". Two research questions are connected with the assumed research aim:

*RQ1. In what type of challenges do museums participate?*

*RQ2. How is this activity apprehended?*

## Research methods

The conducted study is a part of a wider research project focused on stakeholders relation management and value co-creation processes in museums, in which also forms of activity and interaction in museums' social media context are explored. Hence, the trigger for this research is connected to the data collection within the bigger research purpose. Starting from the initial database and cases, in further stages the research purpose and research questions were specified.

In order to achieve the research aim, the qualitative approach was applied with the content analysis from social media sites. The primary source of data was Facebook, due to its popularity in museums, yet the supportive function had Twitter. Data was collected bidirectionally: manually and with the support of webcrawler.com. With the base of firstly identified museums, the snowball method was used, hence searching from one profile to another. The assumed verification of the collected data (through webcrawler.com and manually) gave the possibility to create a verified set of data. For conducting the searching process, the following keywords were assumed: *wyzwanie, challenge, wyzwanie muzeum, museum challenge*. When the "challenge" word was used in the context of describing some contest or in too general meaning, like an invitation for the creative activity – it was excluded from the further analysis (e.g. Upper-Silesian Ethnographic Park, Facebook, 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2021; Museum in Bielsk Podlaski, Facebook, 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 2020). Although only museums from Poland were included in the analysis, the English language words were also assumed. It provided more reliable sets of data, as many of the names of the challenges are not translated into the Polish version and in such a form, they are mentioned in social media posts or hashtags. After general identification of

museums participating in social media viral challenges, the analysis was focused on the content – what is the profile of the museum, what is the type of the challenge, and how interactions with other entities look like (who nominated the museum and who was nominated by the museum), as also how reactions look like and what was the effect of this activity.

Collected data came from the period beginning in March 2020. The strict data framework was not assumed, but since autumn 2020, the activity focused on viral challenges was weaker, yet the collected set of data is finished in April 2021. The starting point for the analysis is strictly connected with the general situation happening since March 2020. The coronavirus pandemic and announcing the restrictions highly affected the cultural institutions, profoundly affecting how museums organize themselves and conduct the activities. During this time, the intensification of virtual activity was observed both in cases of big, renowned museums as also smaller, local institutions. The activity primarily was focused on the museums' collections, exhibitions, and educational programs, but also on the environmental situation and varied forms of support in the pandemic time. As it was mentioned, the research was centered around the museums in Poland, yet due to the lack of boundaries in social media and inevitable inter-organizational inspirations, in case of necessity, some abroad museums were included in the research context.

## Findings

The pandemic situation caused the intensification of museums' social media presence, by adding, for example, virtual tours or online education events. Moreover, in some cases museum branches started social media activity since March 2020. This situation was noticed in the case of Podlaskie Museum, a branched institution, where four branches emerged on Facebook since half of March 2020 (Historical Museum in Białystok, Tykocin Museum, Museum in Bielsk Podlaski, Alfons Karny Sculpture's Museum). Later on, some branches initiated their activity on other social media sites (Instagram and YouTube – Historical Museum in Białystok, TikTok – Tykocin Museum). Moreover, also specific substantial sections may arrange their own social media activities, as the Archeology Section of Podlaskie Museum, Education Section of Gdańsk Museum, or Education Section of Galicia Jewish Museum. Nevertheless, while exploring the forms of interactive communication, the more relevant factor regards the type of the institution, instead of the organizational form. Therefore, the museums identified as participants in viral challenges were classified according to the type of collections presented in the Central Statistical Office databases (Table 1).

Table 1. Museums participating in viral social media challenges

	Museums participating
TOTAL	71
By the type of collection:	
Open-air museums	10
Art museums	12

Regional museums	23
Interdisciplinary museums	10
Ethnographic museums	2
Military museums	3
Biographic museums	1
Technique and science museums	4
Archaeological museums	2
Historical museums	4

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The findings obtained revealed that participating in viral challenges is not the leading form of social media activity. It was observed in 71 institutions, while the total number of museums is around 950.<sup>6</sup> Besides the type of the collections, museums identified differ also by localization and size. In the name of the categories, the "interdisciplinary museum" can be noticed. According to the definitions provided in the *Culture Statistics. The Methodological Book*, it means an institution in which are gathered artifacts from different fields (*Culture Statistics. The Methodological Book*, 2017). As it may be observed, the most active institutions are regional, art, and open-air, together with the interdisciplinary. The high activity of regional museums revealed that also smaller institutions from lesser cities are apt to be more active in social media (like Regional Museum in Łuków, Regional Museum in Kościan, Museum of Kościerska Land in Kościerzyna). Nevertheless, as the idea of viral challenges is about nominating the next person or institutions, throughout the research also museums not responding to the challenges were identified (Table 2).

Table 2. Museums not participating in viral social media challenges

	Museums which do not participate
TOTAL	33
By the type of the collection	
Open-air museums	2
Art museums	4
Regional museums	12
Interdisciplinary museums	4
Ethnographic museums	1
Biographic museums	4
Martyrdom museums	1
Technique and science museums	3
Historical museums	1
Archaeological museums	1

Source: Author's own elaboration.

<sup>6</sup> <https://stat.gov.pl/wyszukiwarka/?query=tag:muzea> (accessed: 2.08.2021).



The group of museums not responding is a bit smaller. Yet, if the institution was nominated to three or four challenges and reacted only to one or two, then it was included as a participating institution. Hence, the group of 33 institutions consists only of those, which did not respond to any of the challenges. With having mostly second-source data, it is hard to identify all motives of lack of participation. Nevertheless, one of the observable explanations of lacking engagement regards not having a proprietary social media profile (Bishop Ciolek Palace in Krakow, Museum of Palace Interiors in Choroszcz). An interesting position in Table 2 is one martyrdom museum (Museum of Former Extermination Camp in Chełmno-on-Ner), which did not respond to the one charitable-oriented challenge. The motives are not presented, yet it may be an indication that martyrdom museums do not participate in more untypical social media activities, being focused rather on the dissemination of knowledge, remembrance, or commenting on some situations, like Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum occasionally does.

The collected data were analyzed according to the type of participating museums, but also the challenges themselves were analyzed and classified. Results are presented in Table 3. Nevertheless, this is a general framework, as, in practice, many of the challenges are multidimensional activities connected to more than one classification. Yet, the classification proposed indicates key characteristics. Because the social and charitable-focused challenges were the most popular, they were presented as a separate category in Table 3.

Table 3. Classification of social media viral challenges

Classification of challenges									
Social and charitable activities		In view of leading topic				In view of the initiating side		In view of the range	
Focused on funds-collecting	Focused on awareness and attitudes shaping	Focused on museum collections	Art- and culture oriented	Social and charitable activities	Memories	Museum joins in	Museum initiates	Local challenge	Nationwide or inspired by the abroad challenges

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Starting from the right part of the table, the first classification regards **the range of the challenge**. This type of classification reflects that the main idea is concentrated especially on the particular region, while in others, museums can nominate local institutions, but also the organization from the other side of the country and the idea remains untouched. Hence, in the group of nationwide challenges, the nomination goes both to the institution from the same city or a very distant one (e.g. Wrocław Contemporary Museum nominated on Facebook on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 in #Hot16Challenge2 Art Museum from Łódź, BWA Wrocław Galleries of Contemporary Art and Symposium Wrocław), and the crucial purpose of challenges is not destroyed. On the contrary, the local challenges are focused on one specific area and going beyond the boundaries will modify the challenge itself. The typical local challenges are a small group, connected to some form of social activity, sharing



memories or creating attitudes and comprising of two activities: *#hot16IKSWPchallenge* and *#slaskiechallenge*. As the authors noticed:

*Well how, challenge accepted? Silesia is still beautiful? Do you remember how? [...] Post the photo on your profile and write a few words about this. Mark as #slaskiechallenge and #slaskiedalejpiekne* – Upper-Silesian Ethnographic Park, Facebook, 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2020, below this twelve institutions from Silesia were marked;

*The overlay is also a sign of our solidarity in this time hard both to us and the local government. Under the slogan #hot16IKSWPChallenge, together with [...] National Museum in Gdańsk, West-Kashubian Museum in Bytów, Museum-Kashubian Ethnographic Park [...] prepare the text about the role of the culture in self-governance* – Baltic Sea Cultural Center in Gdańsk, Facebook, 27<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020.

The next type regards **the party initiating the challenge**. Hence, museums join the challenges (after being nominated) or may initiate this activity. The results revealed that the more popular are the challenges to which museums joined in. Challenges being initiated by museums can be also inspired by other similar activities (e.g. *#niebawemwMNW*, Facebook, National Museum in Warsaw, 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020; *Let's back in time*, Facebook, Museum of Folk Architecture – Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek), hence, each of the dimensions proposed might be overlapping. The challenge evidently presenting the original idea of the museum is named “*#ghostsgallery*”, created in The Vistula Museum in Kazimierz Dolny (Facebook, 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2020):

Black Lady from Janowiec challenges to duel with ghosts from the museums in Poland and even in a world. [...] Where does the scariest spook live? The nominees have to present their mystery stories, but also nominate at least two museums for this game. [...] Photo, painting, gif, movie, song-optional form, but do not forget about the short story of your characters and the name of the hashtag. [...] We nominee to the challenge.

Unfortunately, the social media analysis does not reveal that any of the museums undertook this challenge. Hence, the more popular are the initiatives to which museums join and the good example are social and charitable challenges (e.g. *Gaszyn Challenge* addressed to different people, *Hot16Challenge*, and similar initiatives). The joining to the challenge after the nomination very often concerns nomination not from the museum, but from other institutions (Fig. 1).

The above-presented figure is an example of the next classification regarding **the topic of the challenge**. This is the widest and the most diverse classification. The challenges may regard museum collections strictly, inspiration by art and culture, memories, and social and charitable activities as well. Within this category, it is possible to observe a bit modified approach and understanding what viral challenge is.

Fig. 1. An example of a challenge to which museum joins in

**Muzeum Okręgowe w Sandomierzu**  
March 23 · 🌐

#muzeumonline #mos #zamek #sandomierz #RazemDlaBartusia #SiePomaga #9milionowserc dla Bartusia 📍

Zespół Muzeum Okręgowego w Sandomierzu włącza się w akcję #9milionowserc dla Bartka z Sandomierza.

Dziękujemy Lapidarium pod Ratuszem za nominację. Do challengego zapraszamy:

- Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Tarnobrzega
- Muzeum Regionalne w Stalowej Woli
- Muzeum Regionalne w Janowie Lubelskim
- Zamek w Baranowie Sandomierskim
- Lasowiański Zespół Obrzędowy
- Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Lontowie
- Miejsko Gminny Ośrodek Kultury i Sportu w Koprzywnicy
- Miejsko Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Klimontowie
- Miejsko- Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Zawichodzie
- Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Samborcu
- Gminna Biblioteka Publiczna w Obrzowie

i wszystkich ludzi dobrego serca pragnących wesprzeć tę szczytną akcję.

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Mój syn Bartus potrzebuje aż 9 milionów serc w postaci złotych. Ja swoje serce oddałam w całości Bartusowi 📍 Postanowiłam poprosić was o dołączenie do mnie! Bartus choruje na SMA – rdszeniowy zanik mięśni. Gaśnie na naszych oczach. Razem możemy mu pomóc! Proszę przekazać serce mojemu synkowi!

Zasady challengego:

1. Każda osoba włączająca się do akcji nominuje 3 lub więcej osób. Na wykonanie zadania jest 48 godzin.
2. Nagrywamy filmik/bądź robimy zdjęcie z sercem, które wirtualnie przekazujemy Bartusowi oraz udostępniamy na swoim profilu facebookowym.
3. Osoby biorące udział w challenge wplacają minimum 10zł na konto: 📍 📍 📍
4. Osoby wykonujące challenge do zdjęcia/video z fanem dołączają cały ten tekst plus podają nominowane przez siebie osoby.

Poznaj historię Bartusia: 📍 📍 📍  
<https://www.siepomaga.pl/bartus-sma>

Dziękuję za każde przekazane 📍 dla mojego syna!

Zachęcamy do skorzystania z naszej muzealnej Skarbnki Pomagacza – wszystkie darowizny trafiają bezpośrednio na konto głównej zbiórki. Razem możemy więcej! 📍

#museumonline #mos #sandomierz#RazemDlaBartusia#SiePomaga#9milionowserc for Bartus

District Museum in Sandomierz team joins the action #9milionowserc for the Bartek from Sandomierz

Thank you Lapidarium pod Ratuszem for the nomination. We invite to the challenge:

Historical Museum of Tarnobrzeg

Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola

[...]

Lasowiański Ritual Ensemble

[...]

Communal Centre of Culture in Samborzec

[...]

Rules of the challenge:

[...]

Source: Facebook profile, District Museum in Sandomierz, 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2021

Fig. 2. An example of a challenge focused on museum collections

**Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie**  
Apr 6, 2020 · 🌐

#niebawemMNNW

Dziękujemy, że pozostajecie na łączach ze sztuką! 🙌🏻🙌🏻🙌🏻

Wasze kreacje przesyły nasze najśmielsze oczekiwania, tytuł „Pomarzańczak” nie widział nawet sam Gierzyński 😄

Publikujemy najciekawsze stylizacje i czekamy na więcej 😊

👤👤👤

Jak to zrobić?

1. Wejść na Cyfrowe MNW i wybrać dzieło sztuki z naszej kolekcji (nasze propozycje poniżej) 📄
2. Poszukać w domu materiałów, które pomogą Ci odtworzyć wybrane dzieło 🎨
3. Przybierz pozę i poproś współdomownika o zrobienie Ci zdjęcia 📸
4. Opublikuj zdjęcie na Facebooku lub Instagramie, oznaczając profil Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie i opatrując je hashtagiem #niebawemMNNW 📌

I najważniejsze – nie trać poczucia humoru! 😄

Do rzucenia wyzwania zainspirowało nas Getty Museum 🏛️

#BetweenArtandQuarantine

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Nasze propozycje dzieł do wykonania stylizacji:

- 🔹 Jacek Malczewski, „Hamlet polski - Portret Aleksandra Wielopolskiego”; <http://bitly.pl/Zr4A4>
- 🔹 Jan Matejko, „Stańczyk”; <http://bit.ly/2k8gmtM>
- 🔹 Konrad Krzyżanowski, „Portret Michalina Krzyżanowskiej, żony arysty”; <http://bit.ly/2DINZpel>
- 🔹 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, „Gitarzysta”; <http://bit.ly/29Cjdlr>
- 🔹 Anna Bilińska, „Portret młodej kobiety z różą w ręku”; <http://bit.ly/1po66WZ>
- 🔹 Antoni Brodowski, „Edyp i Antygona”; <http://bit.ly/2VAFzuc>
- 🔹 Tamara Lempicka, „Znużenie”; <http://bitly.pl/E41YC>
- 🔹 Tadeusz Stryka, „Portret Poli Negri”; <http://bitly/1UN70yo>
- 🔹 Marcello Bacciarelli, „Portret Stanisława Augusta z klepsydrą”; <http://bit.ly/2DWG16D>
- 🔹 Aleksander Gierzyński, „Żydówka z pomarańczami”; <https://bitly/2Zt5NK>
- 🔹 Józef Simmler, „Portret Marii Róży i Róży Marii Karoliny Kronenberg z psem”; <http://bitly/3avjZh>

#niebawemMNNW

Thank you for staying on the lines with the art!

Your creations were beyond our greatest expectations, so many “fewesses with oranges” even Gierzyński did not see.

We published the most interesting works and are waiting for more.

How to do that?

1. Enter the Cyfrowe MNW and pick the artwork from our collections (our propositions below).
2. Find in your home materials that might help you to recreate the selected painting.
3. Take a pose and ask the co-householder to take a photo.
4. Publish the photo on Facebook or Instagram, tagging the profile of the National Museum in Warsaw, giving hashtags #niebawemMNNW.

And the most important: don't lose your sense of humor :))

Source: Facebook profile, National Museum in Warsaw, 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020

The challenge, named #niebawemwMNW, represents a category of activity focused around the museum collection. The idea was to recreate a selected work of art in home condition, as this activity was initiated during the first lockdown in April 2020. There is a description of the task presented and what should be done, but there is no direct nomination of the next person or organization. Nevertheless, it cannot be described as a competition or contest. A similar situation regards the challenge #byćjak from Museum of Art in Łódź as also "Let's back in time" from Museum of Folk Architecture – Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek. These two institutions, apart from the description of the task, presented some short invitations to the challenge:

*Who will undertake the challenge?* (Facebook profile, Museum of Folk Architecture–Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek, 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020);

*Do you undertake the challenge?* (Facebook profile, Museum of Art in Łódź, 26<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020).

The post similar to this in Figure 2 was uploaded also on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, with 608 reactions, 46 comments and 177 shares. The post from the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020 is even more popular and reached 3 thousand reactions, 184 comments, and 2600 shares. This idea was very popular among social media users, but also other museums created similar challenges: Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola posted an activity named #zabawawsztukę. They mentioned: *To this challenge we were inspired by the National Museum in Warsaw* (Facebook profile, 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020). Nevertheless, this activity was not to the same extent popular, as this post reached 27 likes and 3 shares. Moreover, under the name #MuseumsandChill, National Museum in Gdańsk created similar activity (Facebook, 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020) with 79 reactions and 20 shares. Hence, the boundaries in social media activity are blurred and inspirations for the activities can be observed.

The last category of challenges regards the **social and charitable activity**. It was presented separately due to the popularity of those types of challenges. Within its framework, two forms can be indicated: money-collecting challenges and awareness-awakening challenges. The money-collecting challenges are represented by Hot16Challenge and Gaszyn Challenge. #Hot16Challenge2 was an idea focused on the support of medical personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge was widely popular among actors, performers and musicians. In the examined group, eight museums were participants in this task (Museum of Krakow, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, The Museum of the Origins of the Polish State, Museum of Technique and Military Equipment in Kalisz, Museum of City of Malbork, Tykocin Museum, The Living Museum of Gingerbread and Wrocław Contemporary Museum). A bit more popular among museums was Gaszyn Challenge, in which 43 institutions participated. The name of this challenge is from the creators of this idea – firemen from the town of Gaszyn, who wanted to help a sick child.<sup>7</sup> After that, the idea was widely spread and under this name the help was addressed to different children. Hence, participating museums note a dedication to what child they are making a task. This viral idea connects museums of different ranges and

<sup>7</sup> <https://nto.pl/gaszynchallenge-o-co-chodzi-w-tej-akcji-i-dlaczego-wszyscy-robia-pompki-to-dla-wojtka-howisa-chorego-na-sma-wideo/ar/c1-15009160> (accessed: 6.08.2021).

organizational forms. Therefore, both Historical Museum in Białystok, Tykocin Museum or Museum of Icons (branches of Podlaskie Museum), as well as regional institutions (Regional Museum in Łuków, Regional Museum in Kościan) or more widely known institutions (National Maritime Museum in Gdańsk or Czartoryski Museum in Puławy) undertook the challenge. Under the post of Historical Museum in Białystok (Facebook, 28<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020) there were 81 reactions, 7 shares and 16 comments, e.g.:

*What an adventure! Helping is cool :); And this is genial! :D And for a great cause!; Let's pay as much as possible.*

The nearby institution, Museum of Icons, posted a challenge task on Facebook on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020. This post reached 55 reactions, 10 shares, and 8 comments, among which all were in a positive tone. Although the focus on financial support seemed to be of big importance, another group of challenges was noticed, which are dedicated to mental support and raising awareness about health issues. Hence, there are two challenges: # Jesteśmyzwaminiebieskimimotyłami and #challengedzieńgodności. Regarding museums' activity, two institutions from southern Poland have to be mentioned: Museum in Przeworsk and Museum in Jarosław Orsetti Tenement House. Apart from the museums, many of the preschools or social institutions were engaged in this viral activity. The ideas of these challenges were as follows:

In the case of challenge #Jesteśmyzwaminiebieskimimotyłami: *The aim of this action is to broad the awareness about the autism and transmit some spark of friend to people with autism and their families. How to transmit this spark? It is enough to do one of these three things: [...]* (Facebook profile, Museum in Przeworsk, 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2021);

In the case of challenge #challengedzieńgodności: *The aim of the action [...] is to focus the attention towards the right of people with intellectual disabilities to the equal participation in all the areas of social life; to popularize the knowledge about the Day of the Dignity of the People with Intellectual Disabilities* (Facebook profile, Museum in Jarosław Orsetti Tenement House, 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021). Taking into account that in the two challenges institutions other than museums participated, it may be observed that boundaries are not specified as also the influence and inspiration to the action comes from different directions.

## Discussion

The findings obtained revealed that the importance of social media in many contexts is gradually more visible. The pandemic time and related restrictions caused an intense transfer of many activities and organizational projects to the social media space. It can be beneficial in many ways, but also might bring some risk or danger (e.g. Wiederhold 2020; Przybysz and Knecht 2020), hence, the deliberated use is of importance. The potential risk differs regarding whether individuals are discussed, or organizations from a specific sector. The intensity of social media presence regards also museums and even if using the full potential of those channels is still a bit problematic (e.g. Kydros and Vrana 2021), gradually more museums use diverse forms of social media interaction and communication.

Nevertheless, their presence in social media concerns some specific characteristics, relevant and visible also during the pandemic. The deliberate and thoughtful usage is especially about the ethics of the content, hence, what materials can be published and in what form (Wong 2011; Manikowska 2020). This is confirmed in obtained findings and in the previous research (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020; Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021), that type of the museum can highly affect what content will be published in social media. This might be the reason why one martyrdom museum was nominated to the challenge and did not undertake this activity. Although the challenge was about charitable action, it might be not within the framework of presented materials and with the general social media strategy. Participation in the viral challenges looks like an occasional activity, yet the form and the tone in which the challenge is presented is consistent with the rest of the content. Therefore, there is some informal language or direct information (e.g. Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola, Historical Museum in Białystok, Museum in Tykocin). Moreover, some of the challenges have elements of humorous communication, which tends to be appropriate in the art, regional or open-air museums (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2020). The fact that Gaszyn Challenge is addressed to the kids from different localizations (close to the museums) revealed also that museums are connected to their closest environment and its community. This form of connection is a vital factor for museums, not only in the virtual context (e.g. Crooke 2010). It also showed that social media space and “offline space” cannot be separated (Sawczuk 2020). Museums do not only participate in temporal social media actions but they are still oriented toward social inclusion by workshops or programs dedicated to people with special needs. Hence, social media actions are overlapping with the actions realized on site. During pandemic and pandemic restrictions it was even more visible, like, for example, by the realization of hybrid events or online lessons for schools. Besides the connection with the local community, the presence in social media gives chances to the smaller museums as well for promotion. It may regard benefits for museums at first, but also benefits for institutions and people from the surroundings.

The forms of interactive communication realized by museums very often have few dimensions hence, for example, humorous messages might be combined with open questions or competitions (Najda-Janoszka and Sawczuk 2021). This diversity of the messages applied is clearly presented also while the challenges are examined. Hence, only some of them present the main assumption like the nomination of the next participants (Burgess et al. 2018). In challenges from the categories about culture and art, as museum collections as well, there is a lack of direct nomination, being replaced by the general invitation to the participation. Yet, the idea of creativity remains, as the case of the #niebawemWMNW challenge presents, similarly as virality of the content, which received a big number of shares. Therefore, even if some of the examples do not have all characteristics of the viral challenge: direct nomination and creativity (Burgess et al. 2018), at least one of these characteristics can be identified. Thus, whilst noticing a modified approach to itself idea of the viral challenge, all activities mentioned can be classified in this way.



## Conclusion

Participation in viral challenges is not a dominant activity of museums, yet findings revealed that this is situated within the substantial activity of the museum. The connection to the core topic was revealed both in challenges about the culture, art, and museum collections, and also in social activities. Hence, virtual focus on social support is connected to what museums do off-site. Thus, the reaction for the challenges is good, as the participation looks as a deliberated activity. Nevertheless, viral challenges in museums have different forms, as also there is a different approach to creating the challenge and nominating next people. Even if challenges are deliberated and suited to the museums' profile, some groups of museums are more apt for this initiative than other. This also confirmed that analysis basing on the museum type can provide interesting findings.

The study has also limitations. Firstly, it is limited by the time perspective. March 2020 was a very specific and hard time for all museums, as all activities were transferred to the virtual sphere. Therefore, by necessity, activity in the social media was much more intense than before. Hence, the study can be repeated in later time in order to compare how such challenges are conducted while on-site work is allowed. It will be good to explore also if this was only some general trend or rather a unique, but constant element of the social media presence. The second limitation regards the territorial area of the study, which was concentrated on the Polish museums. Nevertheless, this research gives an interesting contribution to the perspective of the museums' participation in social media. Hence, interactive communication with individual visitors and with varied institutions is in the same way important. Results of the interorganizational cooperation can be presented to the visitors, hence still there can be a connection with them. Moreover, participation in viral challenges showed that museum is opened to new activities and does not close itself to the environmental influence, which seems to be a very relevant factor in creating the museum offer and building the communication with the visitor.

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### Abstract

Due to the new social media channels as well as an increase of content created, growingly important is a creative approach to the content creation. One way is the forming of the viral content and challenges. The pandemic time revealed that museums undertake unstandardized activities and take up the challenges. The research aim was to analyze museums' activities in viral social media challenges. The qualitative content analysis method was conducted to realize the assumed aim. Findings revealed that although such activity is rather occasional, it is always consistent with the museums' core topics and social actions. The participation in challenges revealed also the importance of building relations with organizations.

### Sieciowe wyzwania jako nowa forma aktywności muzeów w mediach społecznościowych

#### Streszczenie

Wobec nowych kanałów społecznościowych i wzrostu tworzonych treści coraz istotniejsza jest kreatywne tworzenie treści. Jednym ze sposobów jest tworzenie treści i wyzwań

wirusowych. Czas pandemii pokazał, że także muzea próbują niestandardowych form aktywności i podejmują wyzwania. Celem badania była analiza aktywności muzeów w wyzwaniach sieciowych. Do jego realizacji zastosowano jakościową analizę treści. Wyniki wykazały, że chociaż aktywność jest względnie rzadko podejmowana, to zawsze jest ona spójna z merytoryką muzeum i z działalnością społeczną. Udział w wyzwaniach pokazuje też, że budowanie relacji z organizacjami jest coraz istotniejsze.

**Key words:** activity, challenge, museum, social media

**Słowa kluczowe:** aktywność, media społecznościowe, muzeum, wyzwania

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