



## Enhancing Engagement With Museums Through Phygital Marketing Strategies ⓧ

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### Abstract

The role of museums has significantly evolved from being guardians and researchers of the heritage to becoming active social and community agents, a transformation influenced by digital technologies and participatory approaches. This chapter investigates the application of Phygital strategies in museums, which integrate physical exhibits with digital platforms, in enhancing visitor engagement and education. It explores the current landscape of Phygital approaches in museum marketing and their impact on visitor experiences. The study highlights how museums leverage immersive technologies to create innovative and memorable on-site and online experiences. Despite the increasing adoption of digital strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature on Phygital practices remains secondary in museum studies, often found within technical publications or broader heritage management discussions.

### Full Text Preview

### Introduction

The role of museums has diversified in the past few years, as reflected by the most recent definition given by ICOM and the discussions surrounding this concept (ICOM, 2021, 2022; Zbucea, 2022). Museums are not only cultural organizations. Their roles shifted consistently in the past two decades, becoming increasingly more social and community agents. Numerous authors have discussed this transformation of museums towards social and activist organizations (see, for instance, Black, 2012; Casey, 2007; Chipangura & Mataga, 2021; Jane & Sandell, 2019; Smith, 2014), as well as their increasing interactive and participative approaches (Simon, 2010; Tøndborg, 2013). This participatory component is connected and enhanced by digital technologies (Jagodzincka, 2023; Roßkopf, 2023).

Another trend observed in recent years is that museums have increasingly embraced digital technologies to augment visitor experiences and reach broader audiences, both on-site but also online. The latest trend concerns exploring XR and AI technologies in museums (Lin et al., 2018; Margetis et al., 2020; Bira & Zbucea, 2023), focusing on their contribution to attracting visitors and enhancing experiences. The metaverse is even credited for promoting inclusiveness and visitor participation (Hutson & Hutson, 2023). It looks like this enthusiastic adoption of new technologies and their uses shape the future of museums, transforming how exhibitions are designed and delivered and, ultimately, researching and inventorying museum collections. Even if XR and AI technologies are here to stay, less is known about how deep they are engrained in museum practices (Silva & Teixeira, 2021) and what challenges must be met due to costs and the level of digital skills required. Additionally, topics such as how and if virtual exhibitions and various museum projects revolving around digital technologies will “survive” to the next generation of devices and software architecture are less explored, despite warnings from previous experiences.

In this line, the integration of physical and digital elements, known as “Phygital” approaches, remains relatively unexplored within the context of marketing strategies in the museum sector. Broadly defined as an experience that combines the physical and digital worlds in the same place and space (Baldi, 2023), a phygital approach (within museums) is seen as a conceptual innovation (Baldi, 2023) whose aim is to digitalize a physical location by integrating experiences provided via digital means/platforms (Belghitti et al., 2016). Additionally, in a museum context, a phygital exhibition is seen as an environment created by combining two