

Digital Value Co-Creation: The Case of Worthy a Virtual Collaborative Museum across Europe

Authors : Camilla Marini, Deborah Agostino

Abstract : Cultural institutions provide more than service-based offers; indeed, they are experience-based contexts. A cultural experience is a special event that encompasses a wide range of values which, for visitors, are primarily cultural rather than economic and financial. Cultural institutions have always been characterized by inclusivity and participatory practices, but the upcoming of digital technologies has put forward their interest in collaborative practices and the relationship with their audience. Indeed, digital technologies highly affected the cultural experience as it was conceived. Especially, museums, as traditional and authoritative cultural institutions, have been highly challenged by digital technologies. They shifted by a collection-oriented toward a visitor-centered approach, and digital technologies generated a highly interactive ecosystem in which visitors have an active role, shaping their own cultural experience. Most of the studies that investigate value co-creation in museums adopt a single perspective which is separately one of the museums or one of the users, but the analysis of the convergence/divergence of these perspectives is still emphasized. Additionally, many contributions focus on digital value co-creation as an outcome rather than as a process. The study aims to provide a joint perspective on digital value co-creation which include both museum and visitors. Also, it deepens the contribution of digital technologies in the value co-creation process, addressing the following research questions: (i) what are the convergence/divergence drivers on digital value co-creation and (ii) how digital technologies can be means of value co-creation? The study adopts an action research methodology that is based on the case of WORTHY, an educational project which involves cultural institutions and schools all around Europe, creating a virtual collaborative museum. It represents a valuable case for the aim of the study since it has digital technologies at its core, and the interaction through digital technologies is fundamental, all along with the experience. Action research has been identified as the most appropriate methodology for researchers to have direct contact with the field. Data have been collected through primary and secondary sources. Cultural mediators such as museums, teachers and students' families have been interviewed, while a focus group has been designed to interact with students, investigating all the aspects of the cultural experience. Secondary sources encompassed project reports and website contents in order to deepen the perspective of cultural institutions. Preliminary findings highlight the dimensions of digital value co-creation in cultural institutions from a museum-visitor integrated perspective and the contribution of digital technologies in the value co-creation process. The study outlines a two-folded contribution that encompasses both an academic and a practitioner level. Indeed, it contributes to fulfilling the gap in cultural management literature about the convergence/divergence of service provider-user perspectives but it also provides cultural professionals with guidelines on how to evaluate the digital value co-creation process.

Keywords : co-creation, digital technologies, museum, value

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