Chapter 11
Digital Marketing in Cultural Heritage:
An Approach to Metaverse

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary cultural scenario is called upon to face challenges deriving from the intersection between social and technological variables, and to develop new strategic trajectories capable of stimulating the interest and involvement of a new audience of digital natives. If assisted with effective marketing strategies, metaverse and virtual platforms can become a fundamental strategic tool for cultural players to build a lasting and solid relationship with their reference stakeholders and with a new target audience. This chapter analyses the role that digital and immersive technologies can have in increasing participation and engagement of young adult customers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary cultural scenario is called upon to face challenges deriving from the intersection between social and technological variables (Russo-Spena et al., 2020) and to develop new strategic trajectories capable of stimulating the interest and involvement of a new audience of digital natives. The digital is now crucially important for cultural institutions that want to ensure greater engagement from young adults. After the widespread adoption of social media platforms (Buhalis et al., 2022), a disruptive role is played by the implementation of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies and the recourse to the parallel virtual environments of the metaverse haracterized by innovation and interactivity of the cultural experience (Owens et al., 2011; Gadalla, 2013). Younger generations are the most attracted by virtual platforms and interested in new types of cultural assets and innovative ways of selling and paying. The most notable examples are non-fungible tokens (NFT's) and cryptocurrencies, tools that are increasingly common in the artistic market and are allowing new buyers to enter. If appropriately used, these tools can increase the co-creation of value for young adult customers, who seek transformative and meaningful experiences, challenging the traditional operations of the cultural industry (Buhalis & Kataray, 2022). Virtual environments have unexplored potential but the efforts that cultural industries must put forth to adopt this technology, as well as the significant up-skilling costs, are not understated. Indeed, it is not surprising that the first to grasp and exploit the potential of such innovations have been international players of the cultural scenario. Major auction houses and art galleries are investing in new virtual market hubs to provide the digital counterpart to physical venues for the exhibition and sale of artwork, thus gaining a key role in the emerging digital art space.

Given the foregoing, this chapter contributes to the debate, which is in an embryonic stage, on the study of the dynamics activated by cultural marketing in parallel digital environments, through a careful exploration of the process of creating the cultural value of the organisations that make use of it. In particular, this exploratory analysis aims (RQs) on the one hand to highlight the audience behaviours, in particular of Generation Z and Millennials, related to the cultural heritage and, on the other hand, to investigate the role that digital and immersive technologies can have in increasing participation and engagement of young adults.

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