



Social Media Engagement of Saudi and Emirati Museums: A Comparative Study

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Abstract. With the broader use of social media channels by museums around the globe to engage their audiences, the nature of how cultural institutions in various regional settings utilize these technologies is critical to the communication theory. This study fills the gap of scholarly knowledge on the social media communication of museums in the Arabian Gulf as one of the regions that experience significant cultural and digital transformation due to the efforts such as Saudi Vision 2030 and the national innovation strategies of the UAE. This comparative case study has analysed the Twitter/X interaction practices of three major museums: Twitter/X by Ithra (King Abdulaziz Center of world culture) located in Saudi Arabia, Twitter/X by Louvre Abu Dhabi and Twitter/X by the Museum of the Future (MOTF) in the UAE. The data was collected in September-October 2024 and analysed using mixed methods analysis, quantitative engagement and qualitative thematic content analysis. The research question focused on the implications of Twitter activities and content strategies of these museums on audience engagement in their respective institutional and cultural frameworks. The results show unique communication patterns which were influenced by institutional missions and cultural settings of the region. Ithra became the most active, having overall temporal distribution, and the highest level of activity. Louvre Abu Dhabi focused on dialogic communication via replies, whereas thread-based storytelling was favoured by MOTF in the stories of innovation. Thematic analysis shows that cultural approaches including the Arabic literature and Saudi heritage were prioritized by the @Ithra, the art and the cross-cultural dialogue became the priority of the @LouvreAbu Dhabi, and technological innovation became the priority of the MOTF.

Keywords: audience engagement; museum; social media; Saudi Arabia; United Arab Emirates.

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1. Introduction

Social media can allow museums to reach a far larger and more diverse audience across the globe than would be possible otherwise (Marakos, 2014). This online engagement can help influence how citizens perceive their own identity as well as encourage relationships with people from other countries. Beyond exposing a wider audience to their collections, museums can use social media to have a dialogue with national and international audiences in real time. While studies have examined the strategies employed by museums in various countries to

leverage social media (Arnaboldi & Lema, 2021), such as Twitter (rebranded as X in 2023), few have explored this topic in Arab countries along the Persian Gulf.

Geographically, available knowledge on the social media use in museums has focused more predominantly on museums in North America and Europe, but has not thoroughly addressed Arab museums. This geographical bias provides a narrow insight into the ways cultural communication strategies may differ in the various sociocultural settings, especially in those areas where museums are used as explicit nation-building agencies as well as in their traditional educational and preservation purposes.

More importantly there is a theoretical and conceptual gap. What is being shared on social media by museums and the extent to which they engage has been recorded previously. Yet there is a small number of studies that explore why a certain strategy of communication is developed within a particular institutional and cultural setting or how the institutional identity, cultural values, and national development visions influence the digital communication strategies. The communication theory states that the use of social media as an institutionally based communication phenomenon captures the identities of larger organizations, cultural contexts, and relationships among stakeholders (Ruggiero et al., 2021), but these theoretical frameworks are not thoroughly studied in a non-Western museum setting either.

To address this gap, the present study examined the use of Twitter/X by three museums in the region (two in the United Arab Emirates and one in Saudi Arabia). It focused on how they engaged with people online, what content they shared, and how frequently they shared content through features such as comments and likes. In addition, the study explored reach and impressions to assess how effective their strategies for using social media were. By focusing on this understudied region, the study could illuminate how these museums — and potentially others in the region — have been employing Twitter/X to make themselves more interactive and visible. Based on data on Twitter/X usage by three prominent museums in the Arabian Gulf, the study suggests ways that museums in the region could improve their strategies for online outreach, engage with diverse audiences, and have a greater impact on culture.

The museums were the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Museum of the Future, and Ithra. The researcher chose these museums because of their cultural and architectural value in the region and relative audience reach, as they have millions of visitors each year and are active on social media. The Louvre Abu Dhabi opened in 2017 in the United Arab Emirates with the goal of becoming a major cultural centre for the region like the Louvre in Paris (Bradford, 2023). Designed by Jean Nouvel, the museum is partially covered by a dome that filters light from above. The collections include a wide variety of objects and art from various time periods, ranging from antiquity to the present day. The Museum of the Future, also in the United Arab Emirates, opened more recently in 2022 in Dubai and explores technological innovation in such areas as sustainability (Bradford, 2023). With its unique shape, covered in calligraphy, its exhibitions offer a vision for how life could look decades into the future (Mishra, 2022). The third target museum, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (or Ithra) opened in 2016 in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (Saudi Gazette, 2024). The architectural design, created by the Norwegian company Snøhetta, represents how different cultures are interdependent. In addition to a museum, other areas of the facility include a cinema, a library, and a theatre. Core goals are to encourage regional cultural exchange, cultural development, community outreach, and the sharing of knowledge.

The following sections give a background on how museums have been shown to use social media and the value that Twitter/X in particular offers museums. This is followed by a summary of the study methods, an analysis and discussion of the data, and the final conclusions.

2. Literature Review: How Museums Use Social Media

Previous studies have discussed some topics, such as how museums may perform as educational spaces for wider audiences through optimizing online tools, how museums use social media for marketing and engaging with their audiences, also how social media may become strategic tools for increasing audiences' understanding, as well as for strategic planning and community outreach.

In the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, museums have come to rely increasingly on social media to educate and engage audiences (Huebner, 2023). Content such as short videos has been particularly effective with younger people in the 18–24 age bracket. On the other hand, this technology also comes with various challenges, such as the need for museum visitors and educators to try to have online interactions that are more meaningful (Huebner, 2023). As a result, it is important for museums to showcase educational materials that will be likely to connect with a wide range of people. As became apparent during the pandemic, a core benefit of social media is their ability to connect people in different places, thereby creating the sense of being part of the same community. With more museums turning to online tools, there is a need for museums to find new ways to connect with and educate visitors online.

In a study by Luo et al. (2022), social media marketing significantly improved support as well as social presence and was able to deliver informational material through a more visual and enriching environment. The greater immersion and visitor engagement, in turn, helped them enter a flow state in the museum. Another benefit that social media marketing can have for visitor engagement is encouraging a sense of brand loyalty. In one study, Zollo et al. (2021) found that museum visitors showed a greater likelihood of donating to museums after exposure to social media campaigns, especially when a museum was facing a major problem. Furthermore, museums could use social media platforms to tailor the museum visit to the interests of a given visitor. This use of social media could encourage people to visit a given museum for the first time while helping satisfy visitors and leading them to feel more connected to the museum.

In the past, the trend among museums in the U.S. has been to use social media mainly to communicate simple, one-way messages, such as advertising events (Fletcher & Lee, 2012). In contrast to that approach, more and more museums are trying to use different ways of communicating with visitors or potential visitors in order to foster higher levels of engagement and to have museum-visitor interactions that are more meaningful. This transition from one-way to two-way or multi-way communication has been facilitated by the emergence of social media such as Snapchat and Instagram that have made such interactions easier through more ephemeral content creation options (Villaespesa & Wowkowych, 2020). Users can employ these social media to post images and stories about the museum content they visited and the experiences they had. This online activity highlights a sense of spontaneity, showing how visitors personally engage with exhibits. When museums adopt this type of ephemeral communication, it can lead to their online activity being more dynamic with higher engagement with users, who could feel part of a community.

Museums can analyse data from social media (i.e., trends in posts) to better understand how visitors experience different exhibitions and how well museums are engaging visitors (Gerrard et al., 2017). This data can serve as a form of visitor feedback. By being able to see trends in what visitors want, museums could be better equipped to design and market their exhibits in ways that attract more visitors. Such a strategy offers advantages over older forms of feedback by offering a larger quantity of information in real time about how visitors perceive their museum experiences. The museums that have started using social media analytics in this way can provide more visitor-centric services and adapt more quickly and easily to changing trends.

More and more, museums have realized how social media can help them play a more central role in the local community; however, when they take advantage of this strategy, they still tend to employ such platforms mainly for one-way advertising (Ruggiero et al., 2021). Thus, they could follow a more interactive approach to forge stronger links to the communities they serve. Museums could also encourage visitors to discuss and reflect on exhibits by incorporating social media. This was supported by a study by Vassilakis et al. (2017), who indicated that facilitating visitor interaction and connecting museum exhibitions to popular issues could make those exhibitions more relevant and impactful through shared learning and deeper engagement.

Museums have come to rely more and more on Twitter/X for visitor engagement and community building, educational outreach, inspiration and visitor interaction, marketing and promotion, and dialogue and sociability. One of the core benefits that Twitter/X offers museums is the opportunity to engage in community building and to interact more effectively with potential visitors (Kydros & Vrana, 2021). Through this platform, people who visit a museum can produce content that an online audience is more likely to trust and view as authentic, thereby promoting the museum and generating interest in its collections. Museums could thus foster a sense of community and brand loyalty by encouraging people to discuss their museum visits with others on Twitter/X.

Another major area where Twitter/X can benefit a museum is by facilitating the sharing of educational content, a strategy that Baker (2017) found resulted in a larger number of favourites and retweets among users. In addition to promoting higher levels of engagement from users, this content also has the obvious benefit of educating the public. As an example, archaeological museums in Spain highlighted cultural heritage during the COVID-19 pandemic by using Twitter/X to promote citizen participation (Rivero et al., 2020).

Another benefit that Twitter/X can have for museums has to do with inspiration, as it gives museums a platform to inspire their visitors and determine how best to inspire them (Gerrard et al., 2017). Collecting and examining data taken from Twitter/X can enable museums to assess how a given exhibition has affected their visitors. Furthermore, this process can help museums explore the concept of inspiration and its impact on how visitors and museums relate to each other. In addition, this platform gives museums a way to engage visitors directly, in contrast to more traditional, one-way means of mass communication.

A natural role of Twitter/X, as touched on above, is to promote and market museums and their collections (Vrana et al., 2016). Using Twitter/X, museums can deliver messages that are time-sensitive while allowing Twitter/X users to actively participate in those messages rather than merely passively reading them. This use of Twitter/X can be informed by predictive methods, which can help museums post information in a way that is perceived as relevant to the target audience (Furini et al., 2022). The direct audience engagement that Twitter/X allows museums to have can help them get faster feedback on exhibits and can

create a sense of community (Lyons, 2011). The dialogue involved in this online engagement can help museums react to and address problems while increasing their sociability with the public. Furthermore, museums can use Twitter/X to exchange information and work with other museums or organizations.

3. Methods

This comparative case study examined how three major museums in Gulf monarchies employed Twitter/X. Thus, it was guided by the following research question: how do the Twitter/X activities and content strategies of @Ithra, @LouvreAbuDhabi, and @MOTF influence audience engagement, and what strategies can enhance their social media presence? This design was chosen to analyse the use of Twitter/X for cultural education and engagement.

The data consisted of quantitative engagement metrics and qualitative content analysis of Twitter/X posts from September to October 2024. This two-month duration was chosen strategically since they are normal operating periods which do not coincide with major cultural/ religious holidays (Ramadan, Eid, year-end holidays) that could cause seasonal anomalies and rather reflect regular patterns of communication. Besides, September is the time of culture programming resumption following summer lulls in the Gulf region which is an active period of institutional programming with a wide range of content. The researcher collected the data from Twitter/X through the Twitter/X API and third-party analytics tools during the two months noted above. Posts were collected from the target museums' official Twitter/X accounts.

The collected data were then grouped according to type of content and organized in a spreadsheet to facilitate the subsequent coding and analysis process. Any duplicate posts, and any other content deemed irrelevant to the study were excluded before data analysis. That process involved assessing level of interaction, trends, and the museums' performance in relation to each other. This was done to determine useful strategies that could be recommended for these and other museums in the region. The temporal analysis was used to determine the most active posting days and time of the day. Engagement rate was determined as: (Likes + Retweets + Replies)/ Impressions x 100 and it is a normalized measure of comparing effectiveness among accounts with varying follower bases.

To determine content visibility and user interaction, this study examined certain metrics on Twitter/X, which included engagement rate, impressions, likes, replies, retweets, video views, and link clicks. Engagement rate was defined as total interactions divided by total impressions and was used to indicate how effective a given tweet was, while impressions were used to assess how visible a tweet was. Likes, replies, and retweets indicated how engaged users were and how positive their perceptions of the content were. Video views and link clicks indicated how well videos and links could boost engagement. In addition to the quantitative data above, this study also employed content analysis, a qualitative method, to assess the data in terms of thematic, cultural, tonal, linguistic, and visual factors. The study examined what was posted (e.g., promotional vs. educational content) and evaluated the extent to which this context was in alignment with the goals of the museum. In addition, the researcher looked at how inclusive the language was as well as how images and videos were used for the purpose of boosting engagement.

A systematic coding process based on the theoretical frameworks was followed in order to obtain content analysis. First, there was the development of a deductive coding framework with categories emerging out of dialogic level of communication (provision of information, response to audiences, revisiting), categories of content type (promotional, educational,

interactive, behind-the-scenes, community-generated), thematic areas (art/culture, heritage, innovation, events, institutional identity), elements of visual rhetoric (emojis, pictures, videos types), and language (Arabic, English, bilingual, formal/informal tone). Next, there was inductive open coding whereby the 281 tweets were read in sequences, and new themes that were not planned within the deductive framework were discovered. It led to the further development of the codebook to incorporate the Gulf-specific themes (national day celebrations, references to Vision 2030, Arabic literary culture).

A reliability assessment was then conducted. Inter-coder reliability was determined with $a = 0.82$ overall (exceeding the acceptable level of $a >= 0.80$) with the aid of Krippendorff alpha used to estimate this metric for categorical codes. Particular dimensions attained: content type $a = 0.85$, thematic codes $a = 0.79$, and dialogic elements $a = 0.80$.

Pattern Analysis was then done. The coded data were studied in terms of pattern within and between accounts. Thematic frequencies were computed (percentage of tweets that focus on heritage and innovation), and qualitative examples were found to demonstrate patterns. The cross-account comparisons studied the influence of the institutional identities and cultural context on content selection.

Due to the mixed-methods design, quantitative engagement patterns were described using qualitative content analysis to reveal the reasons behind the success of some strategies. As an illustration, the high activity in selected tweets led to qualitative analysis of what qualities of content (themes, tone, visual elements) made them unique. On the contrary, quantitative evaluation of the outcome of their engagement was induced after qualitative identification of communication strategies (thread usage).

4. Results

This section provides a comparative analysis of the Twitter/X activity data collected from the three museum accounts targeted in the study: @Ithra, @LouvreAbuDhabi, and @MOTF. This analysis focuses on tweet schedules, engagement metrics, and content strategies. Table 1 gives an overview of the collected data.

Table 1. Overview of the Data

Account	Total Tweets	Original Tweets	Retweets	Replies	Threads
@Ithra	115	78%	13%	7%	16%
@LouvreAbuDhabi	80	71%	7%	22%	17%
@MOTF	86	43%	11%	0%	57%

Overall, during the study period, September to October 2024, @Ithra was by far the most active account with 115 tweets, following by @MOTF with 86 tweets, and @LouvreAbuDhabi with 80 tweets. At 78%, @Ithra also had the highest proportion of original tweets, followed by @LouvreAbuDhabi at 71%. On the other hand, @MOTF had the highest proportion of threads, at 57% of all tweets. Thus, @Ithra and @LouvreAbuDhabi prioritized original content, while @MOTF heavily relied on threads, suggesting detailed storytelling or informational posts. Another notable finding was that @LouvreAbuDhabi engaged more in replies, indicating higher interaction with followers.

Table 2. Twitter/X Posting Schedules

Account	Most Active Days	Least Active Days	Peak Posting Time
@Ithra	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday	Weekend	Morning (8:00 AM–12:00 PM) Afternoon (12:00–4:00 PM) Evening (4:00–8:00 PM)
@LouvreAbuDhabi	Tuesday, Thursday	Weekend	Morning (9:00–11:00 AM)
@MOTF	Tuesday, Thursday	Weekend	Midday (12:00–2:00 PM)

Table 2 shows that the @Ithra account employed a comprehensive posting strategy by posting throughout the day during the morning (8:00 AM–12:00 PM), the afternoon (12:00–4:00 PM), and the evening (4:00–8:00 PM), thereby potentially targeting different audiences. Furthermore, it posted tweets on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. In contrast to @Ithra's all-day strategy, @LouvreAbuDhabi concentrated its efforts during the morning hours, specifically between 9:00 and 11:00 AM. In contrast, @MOTF adopted an even more focused approach by centring its Twitter/X posts around midday, specifically between noon and 2:00 PM.

Table 3. Engagement Metrics

Account	Highest Engagement Record		
	Likes	Views	Retweets
@Ithra	3,677 (16 Sept 2024)	17,909,201 (16 Sept 2024)	905 (16 Sept 2024)
@LouvreAbuDhabi	12 (2 Oct 2024)	1,196 (2 Oct 2024)	4 (multiple dates)
@MOTF	22 (11 Oct 2024)	13,606 (11 Oct 2024)	5 (18 Sept 2024)

On 16 September 2024, @Ithra recorded its highest engagement, with 3,677 likes, 17,909,201 views, and 905 retweets. This remarkable performance highlighted @Ithra's strong connection with its audience and the resonance of its content. In contrast, @LouvreAbuDhabi's highest engagement, on 2 October 2024, consisted of 12 likes, 1,196 views, and four retweets (with retweet records spanning multiple dates). While these numbers were more modest compared to those of @Ithra, they reflected a different strategy, which focused on morning engagement. @MOTF recorded its highest engagement on 11 October 2024, with 22 likes and 13,606 views, and a separate record of five retweets on 18 September 2024. The relatively higher views compared to likes and retweets suggested that @MOTF's content was being seen but might not always have inspired active interaction.

Table 4. Twitter/X Content Strategy

Account	Content Strategy
@Ithra	Mix of original content, threads, and retweets.
@LouvreAbuDhabi	Original content with a focus on replies and threads.
@MOTF	Heavy use of threads for detailed storytelling.

Based on the data, @Ithra employed a diverse content strategy that included a mix of original content, threads, and retweets. This approach allowed @Ithra to keep its feed dynamic and engaging by offering its followers a blend of new, informative, and curated content. While @LouvreAbuDhabi's content strategy prioritized original content with a strong emphasis on replies and threads. By focusing on original content, the museum established itself as a

primary source of information and storytelling, offering unique insights related to art, culture, and its exhibits. Meanwhile, @MOTF's content strategy was heavily focused on the use of threads for detailed storytelling. Threads offer an effective way to break down complex stories or themes into digestible pieces, making it easier for followers to engage with and understand the content.

The results for languages, hashtags, and emojis used in posts on Twitter/X are given in Tables 5, 6, and 7, respectively.

Table 5. *Languages Used in Posts*

Account	Language
@Ithra	Arabic and English
@LouvreAbuDhabi	Arabic, English, and French
@MOTF	Arabic and English

Table 6. *Common Hashtags Used in Posts*

Account	Most Common Hashtags
@Ithra	#إثرا (Ithra) #حفل_أقرأ (iRead Award Ceremony) #أقرأ (iRead) #عام_الإبل_2024 (Year of the Camel 2024)
@LouvreAbuDhabi	#LouvreAbuDhabi #ArtHere2024 #Louvre #PostImpressionism
@MOTF	#MuseumOfTheFuture #MOTF #AviationFutureWeek #متاحف_المستقبل

Table 7. *Common Emojis Used in Posts*

Account	Common Emojis
@Ithra	📣 (Loudspeaker): Used for announcements ♫ (Musical notes): Related to musical performances © (Copyright symbol): Used for copyright 😍 (Starstruck face): Expressed excitement
@LouvreAbuDhabi	🎨 (Paint palette): Represented art and creativity ✨ (Sparkles): Indicated excitement, wonder, or something special 🖼️ (Framed picture): Symbolized artwork or exhibitions 🔍 (Magnifying glass): Encouraged curiosity and deeper exploration of art 📅 (Calendar): Used to highlight dates for exhibitions or events
@MOTF	No emojis were found in the data for this account

After analysing all tweets in the data, the researcher chose the three most common for each account. For the @Ithra account, the three main themes were the following. First, cultural events and programmes. The tweets heavily promoted various cultural events hosted by Ithra (إثراً), including the Tanween Creativity Conference, the iRead Award Ceremony, exhibitions (such as 'The Camel Through the Ages'), book discussions, and workshops. Second, promoting Arabic literature and reading. A significant number of tweets centred around the iRead programme (أقرأ)، emphasizing its role in fostering a love for reading and literature within the Arab world. This included promoting the competition, highlighting winners, and featuring prominent literary figures. Third, Saudi culture and heritage. The feed showcased aspects of Saudi culture, from traditional architecture (like Najdi doors and Rawashin windows) to the significance of camels, coffee, and the celebration of Saudi National Day.

For @LouvreAbuDhabi, the three main themes were art and exhibition, museum events, and cultural historical significance. First, art and exhibitions. The tweets provided information and invited people to visit the museum and enjoy Louvre Abu Dhabi's exhibitions, artworks, and artists. Second, museum events and activities. Tweets about the events and activities organized by the Louvre Abu Dhabi, such as virtual tours, lectures, and workshops. They also announced special offers and discounts for members. Third, cultural and historical significance. Tweets provided deeper contextual information about the cultural and historical importance of artworks and exhibitions.

Finally, @MOTF had the following three main themes. First, future of technology and innovation, discussing advancements in various fields, such as aviation, robotics, and wearable technology. Second, events and collaborations, highlighting events such as Aviation Future Week, showcasing industry leaders and discussions on future trends. Third, museum of the future, focusing on the role of the museum of the future as a hub for exploring and redefining future possibilities.

5. Discussion

This paper set out to check how three Gulf museums, the @Ithra, the @LouvreAbuDhabi, and the @MOTF, utilized Twitter/X to attract the audiences, assess how their posting strategies contributed to the participation, and compare their approach to digital communication in terms of themes and language. This discussion shows important information concerning the alignment of social media activity with the institutional missions, audience behaviour, and emerging theories of the digital age museum communication.

5.1. Activity Patterns and Content Strategies

The initial aim was to examine the volume and nature of Twitter/X concern and the manner in which they influenced the interaction of the audience. Ithra showed the most active approach as original tweets, retweets, and threads were mixed during the day. This is an attempt to cater to various audience needs informational, affective and social, as per the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) that places the agencies of people as the determinant of choosing content that satisfies personal gratifications. By providing material that contained both cultural learning and emotional stories, the platform of @Ithra was effective at reaching out to people in these areas. This finding was also reflected in the analysis of cultural institutions on Twitter/X by Poulopoulos and Wallace (2022), who discovered that diversified and rhythmically posted content is the key to increased online interaction and community visibility.

On the contrary, the use of original content and direct responses (Louvre Abu Dhabi) suggests the more dialogic and conversational approach, which aligns with the Participatory Museum Theory since a two-way interaction in which the audience is a co-creator of meaning is encouraged. This practice represents a move towards one-way flow to two-way flow, which is a new trend in post-pandemic communication in the museum (Borda and Bowen, 2025). Although the quantitative measures of engagement of @LouvreAbuDhabi were low, its emphasis on interaction and cultural conversation indicates that it has a qualitative level of engagement in the form of community building and cross-cultural understanding.

The use of threads as the core of its communication style by MOTF highlights the narrative-based communication strategy used by the company to narrate stories about innovation and technology in details. This can be connected to the idea of deep mediatization, when institutions turn to digital affordances to create the perception of the audience due to narration that repeats constantly (Wang et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the reduced interaction rates in the museum make the high impressions less meaningful, though they also suggest that the content complexity is a factor that may reduce social presence. This problem also reflected in the investigations that found that the cognitively dense digital stories can discourage audience engagement (Poulopoulos and Wallace, 2022).

5.2. Engagement Metrics and Audience Behaviour

The second goal aimed at the examination of the effects that these content strategies had on the audience engagement. The extremely high engagement rates of Ithra, namely, its 17.9 million views and more than 3,600 likes on a single day, underline the effectiveness of the emotional appeal and the authenticity of the culture to evoke involvement. The Social Presence Theory states that when warmth, immediacy, and human closeness are communicated, more audience engagement is enhanced. This result follows the study by Wang et al. (2024), who discovered that original digital narrative and cultural representation of the locals have a significant positive effect on the responsiveness of the masses in museum social media spaces.

On the other hand, the emphasis on replies and the use of multilingual content (Arabic, English and French) by the Instagram account of the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum show that glocalization can be used by museums as it is one of the ways to address the needs of various audiences and preserve the institutional identity. This is in line with the observation by Borda and Bowen (2025) who claim that multilingual and participatory digital practices enhance digital citizenship and participation by the global audiences.

The metrics of MOTF (a large number of views, but comparatively few likes and retweets) indicate the situation of a rather passive consumption but not an active engagement. This is the attention economy that users are taking the content that is visually attractive but not engaging. The article by Technological Forecasting and Social Change (2022) underlines that the posts with a large amount of visual and little to no interaction may increase the visibility but not the depth of relationships, which is why the strategies that combine visual content with calls to action are necessary.

5.3. Cultural and Thematic Framing

The third goal was aimed at the comparison of the thematic and linguistic aspects of the Twitter/X presence of the museums. The content of each account portrays unique institutional identities and discursive interests. The focus of Ithra on the Arabic literature, Saudi tradition, and cultural programming can be termed as a cultural branding mechanism, which involves the employment of the country symbols and language to enhance national identity and encourage international recognition. This aligns with the results of the Rivero et al. (2020) about the Spanish museums in COVID-19, which found out that cultural heritage framing and linguistic localization on social media enhanced more engagement and trust among the population.

Likewise, the multi-lingual nature and emphasis on art and exhibitions of the account, @LouvreAbuDhabi, fits into its international mission of mediating the Eastern and Western accounts of art. With the addition of the Arabic, English, and French languages, the museum presents itself as a transnational cultural diplomacy area, a strategy that will increase inclusivity and cosmopolitanism (Borda and Bowen, 2025).

Conversely, the lack of emojis and informal style of communication in @MOTF strengthens its futuristic image but makes it less emotionally immediate. This artistic restraint is a business incarnation of a communication style, whereby the priorities of the communication are institutional power rather than human connectivity. Although it can be very useful in branding, it restricts the ability to engage on a relational level – echoing the findings of Poulopoulos and Wallace (2022) who observe that affective cues, including emojis and tone of voice used in conversations, are essential in the development of a community online.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the importance of museums using tailored content strategies and posting schedules to maximize engagement on Twitter/X. @Ithra's comprehensive approach and high engagement metrics demonstrated the effectiveness of a diverse content mix and an all-day posting schedule. @LouvreAbuDhabi's focus on original content and interaction with followers could be replicated to build a loyal online community, while @MOTF's use of threads for detailed storytelling aligned with a thematic focus on technology and innovation.

This study concludes that to achieve effective social media engagement of a museum, there should be a balance between informational authority and participatory authenticity. The high involvement of Ithra depicts the significance of connecting cultural narratives with emotional involvement in meeting informational as well as affective satisfactions. The interactive strategy of LouvreAbuDhabi demonstrates how dialogue and multilingual methods can create long-lasting digital communities based on a similar meaning. In the meantime, the example of @MOTF demonstrates the opportunities and constraints of narrative-based interaction in institutions that deal with innovation.

Such results expand on the current body of literature by demonstrating how Gulf museums are both adopting and adapting the world-wide social media habits to fit the cultural context, an example of a kind of digital glocalization in museum communication. The future of museum social media, however, as observed by Poulopoulos and Wallace (2022) and Borda and Bowen (2025), is in applying data analytics, participatory storytelling, and digital citizenship in order to make online cultural spaces more inclusive, engaging, and sustainable.

Based on the findings, this study has recommendations for these museums. For @Ithra, maintaining the current strategy while exploring new themes or collaborations could further enhance engagement. @LouvreAbuDhabi could consider diversifying its posting times to reach a broader audience, and @MOTF could benefit from incorporating more interactive elements to boost likes and retweets, aligning more closely with its high viewership.

Another recommendation is to explore and compare a wider range of museums from around the globe. By examining various institutions, one could gain insights into different cultural perspectives, artistic styles, and historical narratives that each museum presents. Such a comparative analysis could reveal how local contexts influence the curation and exhibition of art and artifacts. Additionally, it would be beneficial to analyse different social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook. Each platform has its own unique user demographics, content styles, and engagement strategies. Comparing how museums use these platforms to reach their audiences could reveal the relative effectiveness of their communication strategies and how they engage with the public. This could include examining the types of posts, frequency of updates, and interaction with followers to assess how effectively museums promote their exhibitions and educational programmes.

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