

Museums' use of social media

Results of an online survey conducted in Switzerland and abroad

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Summary

- Our findings show that by far the most important **goal of museums' social media activities is to gain reach and awareness (96%). Engagement (64%) and conversion goals (54%)** follow in second and third place.
- Comparing the **strategic goals of the museums with the social media contents** that they are ultimately posting on their platforms, similar results were detected: It is striking that museums are focusing on '**information' posts**'.
- In terms of supports used to present information on social media, the findings showed that the content of most of the museums' posts is presented through **images/ pictures and text**.
- As far as the use of different social media platforms is concerned, the survey clearly confirmed **the leading role of Facebook**, with more than 90% of the museums using it (around 80% of museums at least once a week), followed by Youtube (60%), Instagram (50%), TripAdvisor (49%) and Twitter (43%).
- In terms of frequency, some social media platforms such as **Facebook, Instagram and Twitter** are used much more intensively than other platforms.
- Analysing the **challenges and difficulties that museums face when using social media**, the survey showed that the major difficulty mentioned is by far **the lack of resources (86%)**, followed by **the lack of competence/know-how (42%)** and **the challenge of losing control over content and images (39%)**.
- Furthermore, the results of the survey indicate a **rather small budget and personnel allocation to online marketing and social media**. While almost three quarters of the museums allocate less than 5% to online marketing, more than 80% of the museums spend less than 2.5% of their total marketing budget on social media. In terms of staff, online and social media departments in museums account for less than one full-time position on average.
- In a last section, the survey examined **particularities of museums' social media tactics with a focus on tourism**. The results not only highlighted the importance of tourism to museums, but also revealed that social media was the most important marketing channel/platform for museums when targeting tourists. When it comes to content/ topics covered on social media when targeting tourists, besides focusing on information about the visit at the museum and special exhibitions, the findings showed that the content appears not to differ considerably from the general communication.

Zusammenfassung

- Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen, dass das mit Abstand wichtigste Ziel der Social-Media-Aktivitäten von Museen die **Steigerung der Reichweite und des Bekanntheitsgrades** ist (96%). An zweiter und dritter Stelle folgen **Engagement-** (64%) und **Konversionsziele** (54%).
- Vergleicht man die **strategischen Ziele der Museen mit den Social-Media-Inhalten**, die sie letztlich auf ihren Plattformen veröffentlichen, so zeigt sich ein ähnliches Ergebnis: Auffällig ist, dass Museen sich auf die "**Informationsvermittlung**" konzentrieren.
- In Bezug auf die Unterstützung bei der Präsentation von Informationen über Social Media zeigten die Ergebnisse, dass der Inhalt der meisten Beiträge der Museen durch **Photos/Bilder und Texte** dargestellt wird.
- Was die Nutzung verschiedener Social-Media-Plattformen betrifft, so bestätigt die Umfrage eindeutig die führende **Rolle von Facebook**: Mehr als 90% der Museen nutzen Facebook (rund 80% der Museen mindestens einmal pro Woche), gefolgt von Youtube (60%), Instagram (50%), TripAdvisor (49%) und Twitter (43%).
- Häufig werden einige Social Media Plattformen wie **Facebook, Instagram und Twitter** wesentlich intensiver genutzt als andere Plattformen.
- Bei der Analyse der **Herausforderungen und Schwierigkeiten**, mit denen Museen bei der Nutzung von Social Media konfrontiert sind, zeigte die Umfrage, dass die größte Schwierigkeit bei weitem der **Mangel an Ressourcen** (86%) ist, gefolgt von dem **Mangel an Kompetenz/Know-how** (42%) und der Herausforderung, die **Kontrolle über Inhalte und Bilder zu verlieren** (39%).
- Darüber hinaus weisen die Ergebnisse der Umfrage auf einen eher **geringen Budget- und Personaleinsatz für Online-Marketing und Social Media** hin. Während fast drei Viertel der Museen weniger als 5% für Online-Marketing ausgeben, geben mehr als 80% der Museen weniger als 2,5% ihres gesamten Marketingbudgets für Social Media aus. Die Online- und Social-Media-Abteilungen von Museen haben im Durchschnitt weniger als eine Vollzeitstelle.
- In einem letzten Abschnitt wurden die Besonderheiten der **Social-Media-Taktik von Museen mit Schwerpunkt Tourismus** untersucht. Die Ergebnisse unterstrichen nicht nur die Bedeutung des Tourismus für Museen, sondern zeigten auch, dass Social Media der wichtigste Marketingkanal bzw. die wichtigste Marketingplattform für Museen bei der Ansprache von Touristen ist. Bei den Inhalten/Themen, die bei der touristischen Ansprache über Social Media abgedeckt werden, zeigten die Ergebnisse neben der Information über den Museumsbesuch und Sonderausstellungen, dass sich die Inhalte scheinbar nicht wesentlich von der allgemeinen Kommunikation unterscheiden.

Résumé

- Nos résultats montrent que l'objectif de loin le plus important des activités de médias sociaux des musées est de **se faire connaître** (96 %). **L'engagement** (64 %) et les objectifs de **conversion** (54 %) viennent en deuxième et troisième place.
- En comparant les **objectifs stratégiques des musées** avec le contenu des médias sociaux qu'ils affichent sur leurs plateformes, des résultats similaires ont été détectés: il est frappant de constater que les musées se concentrent sur **les postes d'information**.
- En ce qui concerne les supports utilisés pour présenter l'information sur les médias sociaux, les résultats ont montré que le contenu de la plupart des messages des musées est présenté sous forme **d'images/photos et de textes**.
- En ce qui concerne l'utilisation des différentes plateformes de médias sociaux, l'enquête confirme clairement **le rôle prépondérant de Facebook**, avec plus de 90% des musées qui l'utilisent (environ 80% des musées au moins une fois par semaine), suivi de Youtube (60%), Instagram (50%), TripAdvisor (49%) et Twitter (43%).
- En termes de fréquence, certaines plateformes de médias sociaux comme **Facebook, Instagram et Twitter** sont utilisées beaucoup plus intensivement que d'autres.

- Analysant les **défis et les difficultés** auxquels les musées sont confrontés dans l'utilisation des médias sociaux, l'enquête a montré que la principale difficulté mentionnée est de loin le **manque de ressources** (86%), suivi par le **manque de compétence/ savoir-faire** (42%) et le défi de **perdre le contrôle sur le contenu et les images** (39%).
- De plus, les résultats de l'enquête indiquent **un budget et une dotation en personnel relativement faibles pour le marketing en ligne et les médias sociaux**. Alors que près des trois quarts des musées consacrent moins de 5 % de leur budget total au marketing en ligne, plus de 80 % des musées consacrent moins de 2,5 % de leur budget marketing total aux médias sociaux. En ce qui concerne le personnel, le marketing en ligne et les médias sociaux des musées occupent en moyenne moins d'un poste à temps plein.
- Dans une dernière section, l'enquête a examiné **les particularités des tactiques des musées en matière de médias sociaux pour la promotion touristique**. Les résultats ont non seulement mis en lumière l'importance du tourisme pour les musées, mais ont également révélé que les médias sociaux étaient le canal/plateforme de marketing le plus important pour les musées lorsqu'ils ciblaient les touristes. En ce qui concerne les contenus/thèmes couverts par les médias sociaux en ciblant les touristes, outre l'information sur la visite du musée et les expositions spéciales, les résultats montrent que le contenu ne semble pas très différent de la communication générale.

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Context of the study

- A survey among museums in the German part of Switzerland in 2010 showed that only around one third of the museums used social media, with fewer than 15% being actually active on Facebook. It was concluded that the museums were interested in the use of social media, but didn't know how to apply this new media.* Other studies carried out around the same time showed similar findings, highlighting the low use, missing strategy or rather experimental approach of museums.** On the other hand, social media have become vital in the daily lives of consumers, creating opportunities for companies and content producers to engage in dialogue with their audiences.***
- The present report reflects the results of an **online survey** derived from a research project carried out at the School of Management & Tourism at HES-SO Valais/Wallis. The **aim** of the online survey is primarily **to provide insights about the current social media use of museums**, revealing tactics that represent state-of-the art strategies. In addition, the survey examined the specificities of social media tactics for museums in a tourism context.
- * Vogelsang, A., Minder, B. (2011, 31 March). Audience+: A Holistic Approach to Developing Social Media Guidelines for Swiss Museums. *Museums and the Web 2011: Proceedings*. Toronto: Archives & Museum Informatics. Retrieved from https://museumsandtheweb.com/mw2011/papers/audience_a_holistic_approach_to_developing_soc.html
- ** Helge, K. (2010). *Social Media Marketing in Kunst und Kultur: Empirische Studie von Helge Kaul, Zentrum für Kulturmanagement*. Winterthur: zhaw School of Management and Law. - Schmid, U. (2010). *Das Social-Media-Engagement deutscher Museen und Orchester*. u.s.k
- *** Nielsen. (2017). *2016 Nielsen social media report: Social studies: a look at the social landscape*. The Nielsen Company.

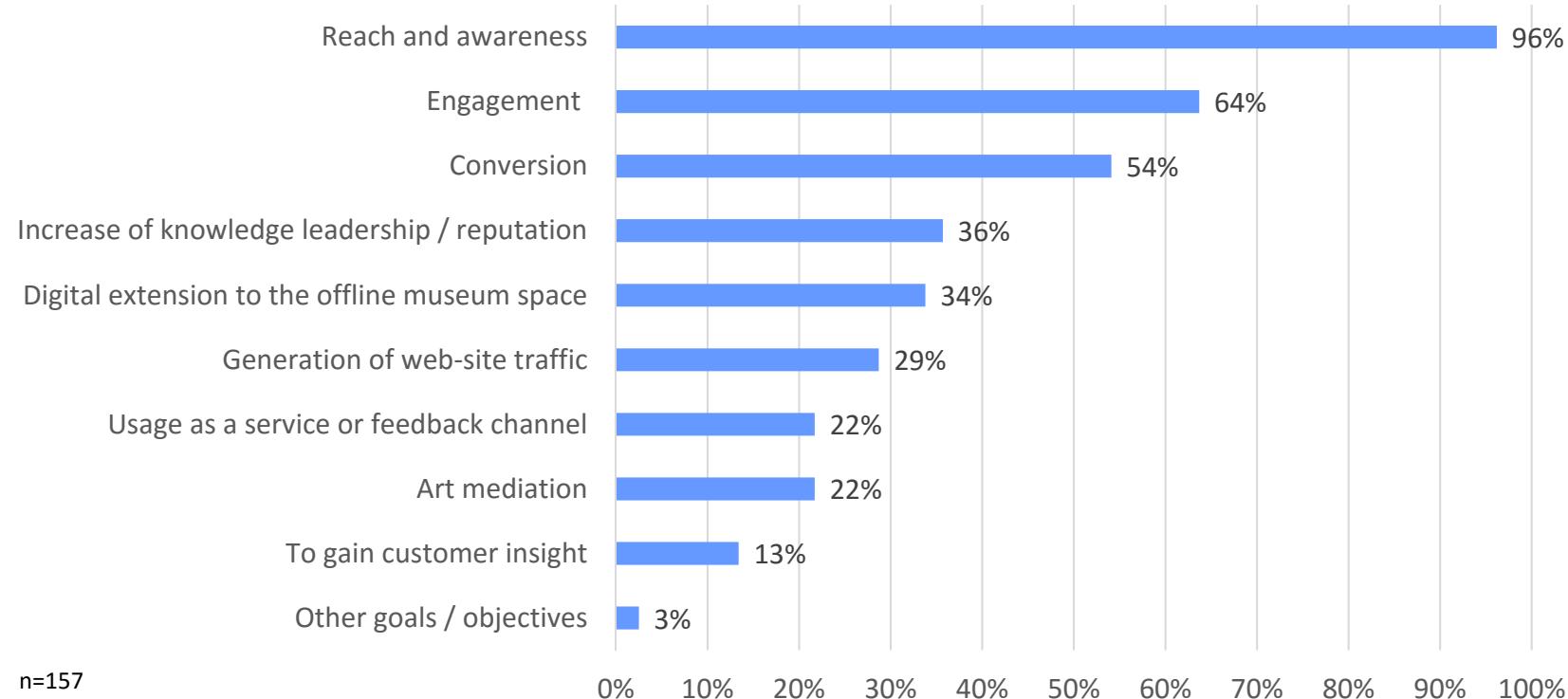
Methodology (1)

- In order to gain insights about the museums' use of social media an **online questionnaire** consisting of 78 question units was sent by email to 686 museums in Switzerland , Europe and in the USA. The museums contacted covered different types/categories and sizes. The questionnaire (see appendix for details) was online from 14 August to 14 September 2017, with a relaunch being made at half time.
- With 163 responses received, the **response rate was around 24%**. However, it has to be highlighted that not all questions have been answered by all institutions.
- Distribution of the sample by size of museums (in terms of annual visitors) :
 - Up to 50,000 attendances per year: 65%
 - 50,001 to 100,000 attendances per year: 14%
 - 100,001 to 500,000 attendances per year: 17%
 - 500,001 to 1,000,000 attendances per year: 1%
 - 1,000,001 and more attendances per year: 4%
- Distribution of the sample by museum category:
 - Art museum: 30%
 - History museum: 14%
 - Museum with a specific theme: 10%
 - Natural history museum: 9% / Regional and local museum: 8%
 - Archaeological museum: 7% / Technical museum: 6%
 - Other category: 14%

Methodology (2)

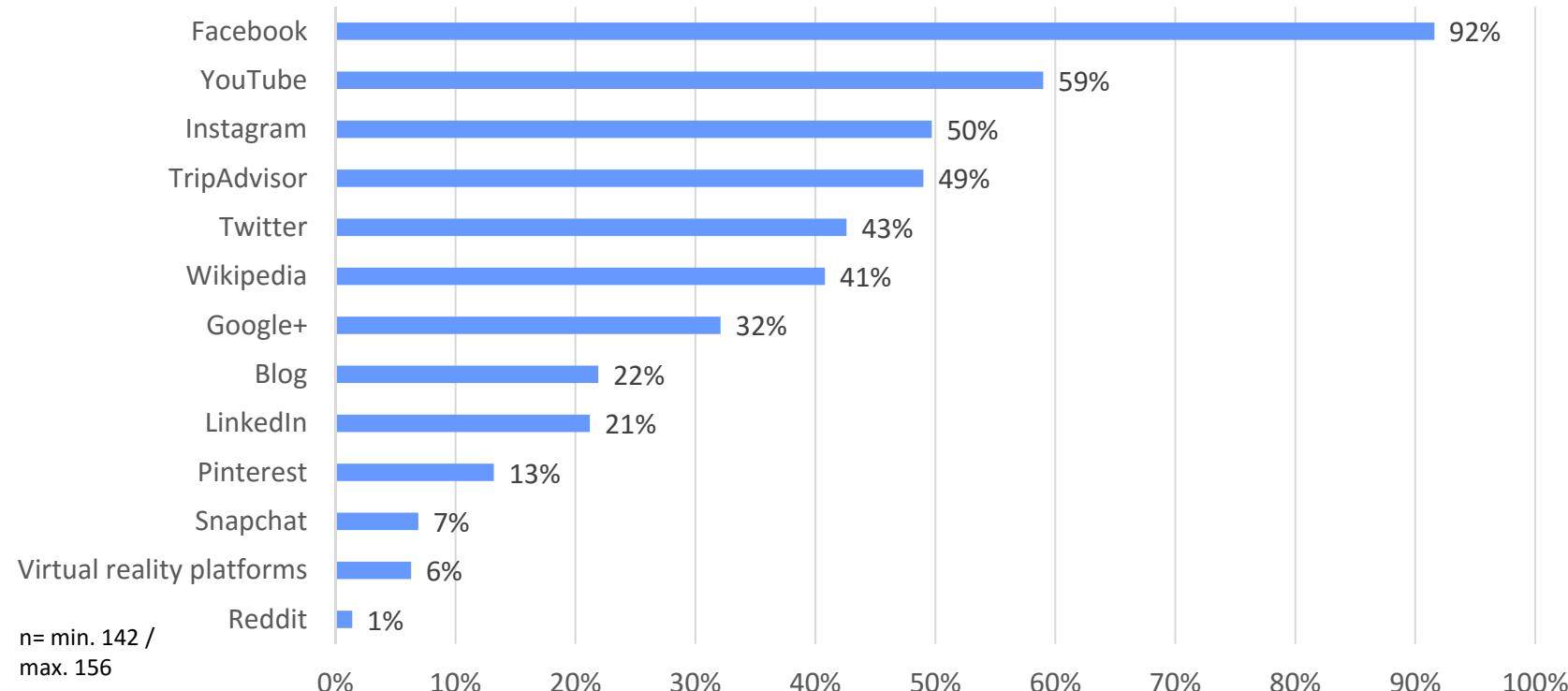
- Distribution of the sample by country:
 - Switzerland: 73%
 - France: 9%
 - Germany: 5%
 - Belgium: 5%
 - USA: 4%
 - Spain: 2% / United Kingdom: 1% / Italy: 1%
- As far as the sample of the online survey is concerned, it has to be mentioned that the museums were not selected randomly out of a statistical population, a rather exhaustive list of Swiss museums and a selection of museums on Europe and the USA was used. In the final sample, Swiss and smaller museums are overrepresented compared to the population contacted. Hence, the sample is subject to a certain bias.

Goals of museums' social media strategies/ activities



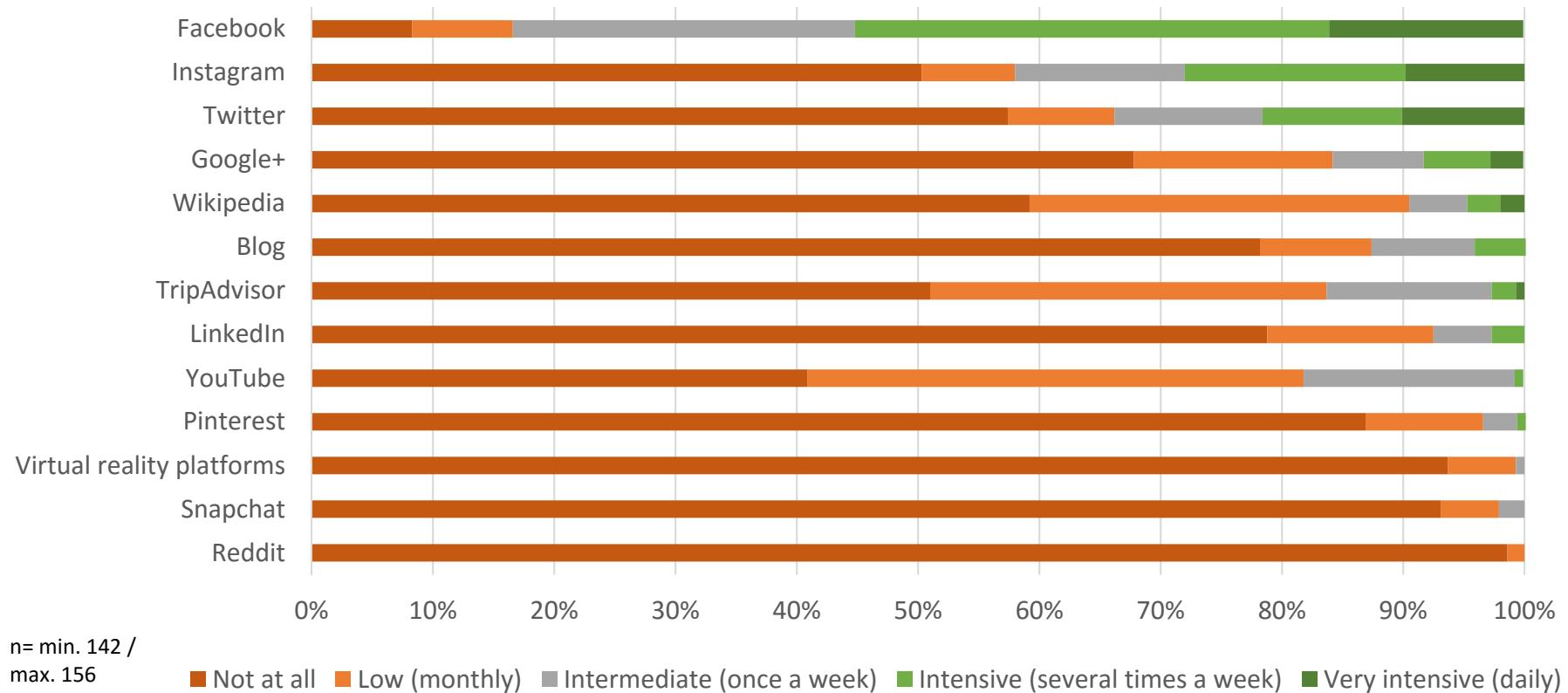
By far the most important goal is to gain **reach and awareness** (e.g. promotion of an exhibition, reaching a new target group, raising the brand profile, etc.) with over 95% of the museums having answered to pursue this goal. **Engagement and conversion goals** follow in second and third place.

Use of social media platforms by museums



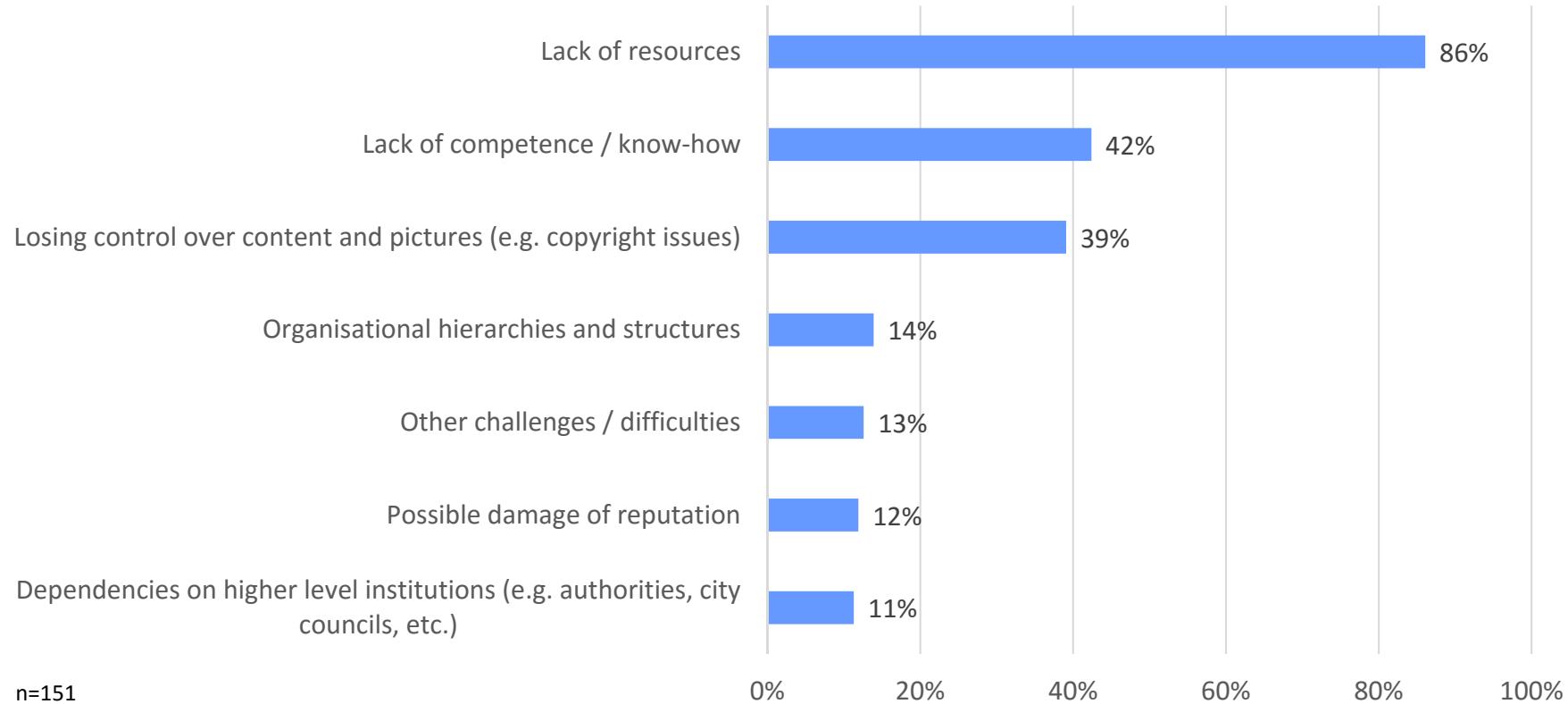
The results reveal the **leading role of Facebook**, with more than 90% of the museums being present on this social media platform.

Use of social media platforms by museums (intensity of use)



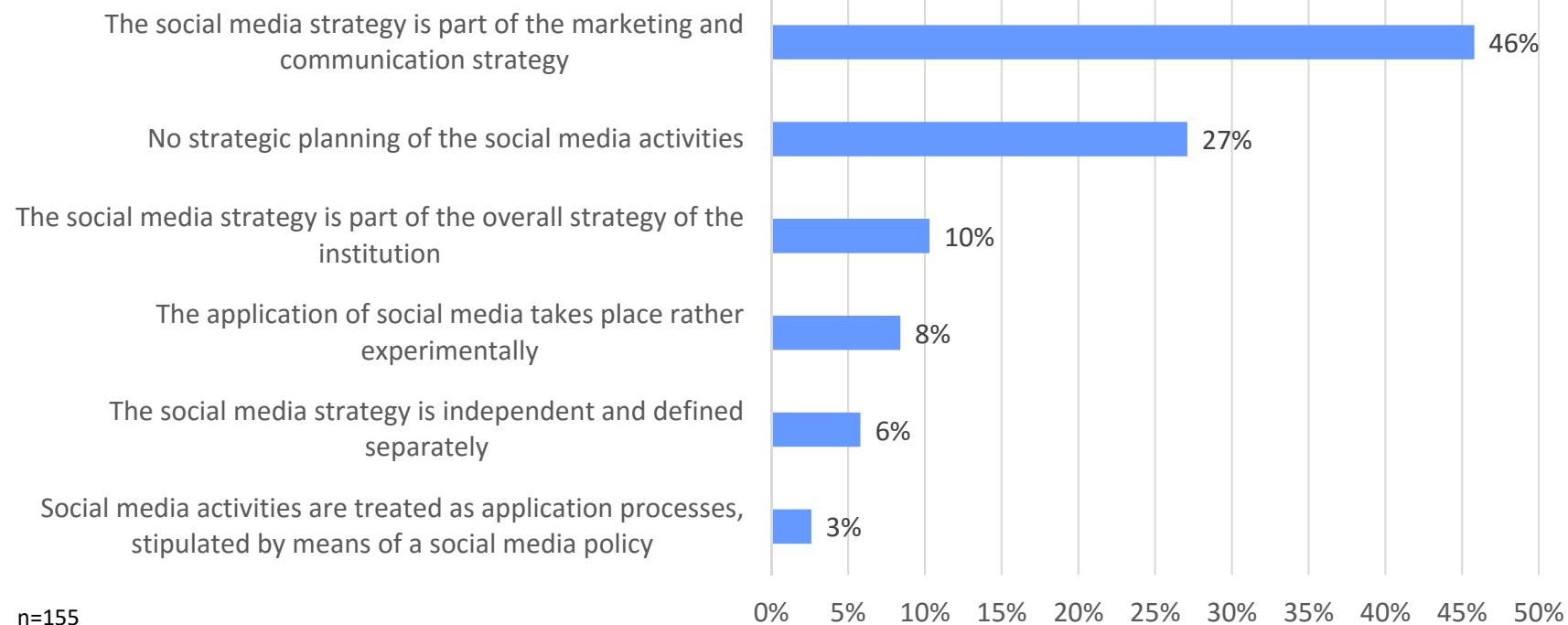
In terms of intensity, the results show that **Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are used much more intensively than other social media platforms**. While Facebook is used at least several times a week by approximately 55% of museums, Instagram by 28% and Twitter by 22% of the museums, less than 3% of the museums use YouTube and TripAdvisor that often.

Challenges/ difficulties regarding museums' use of social media



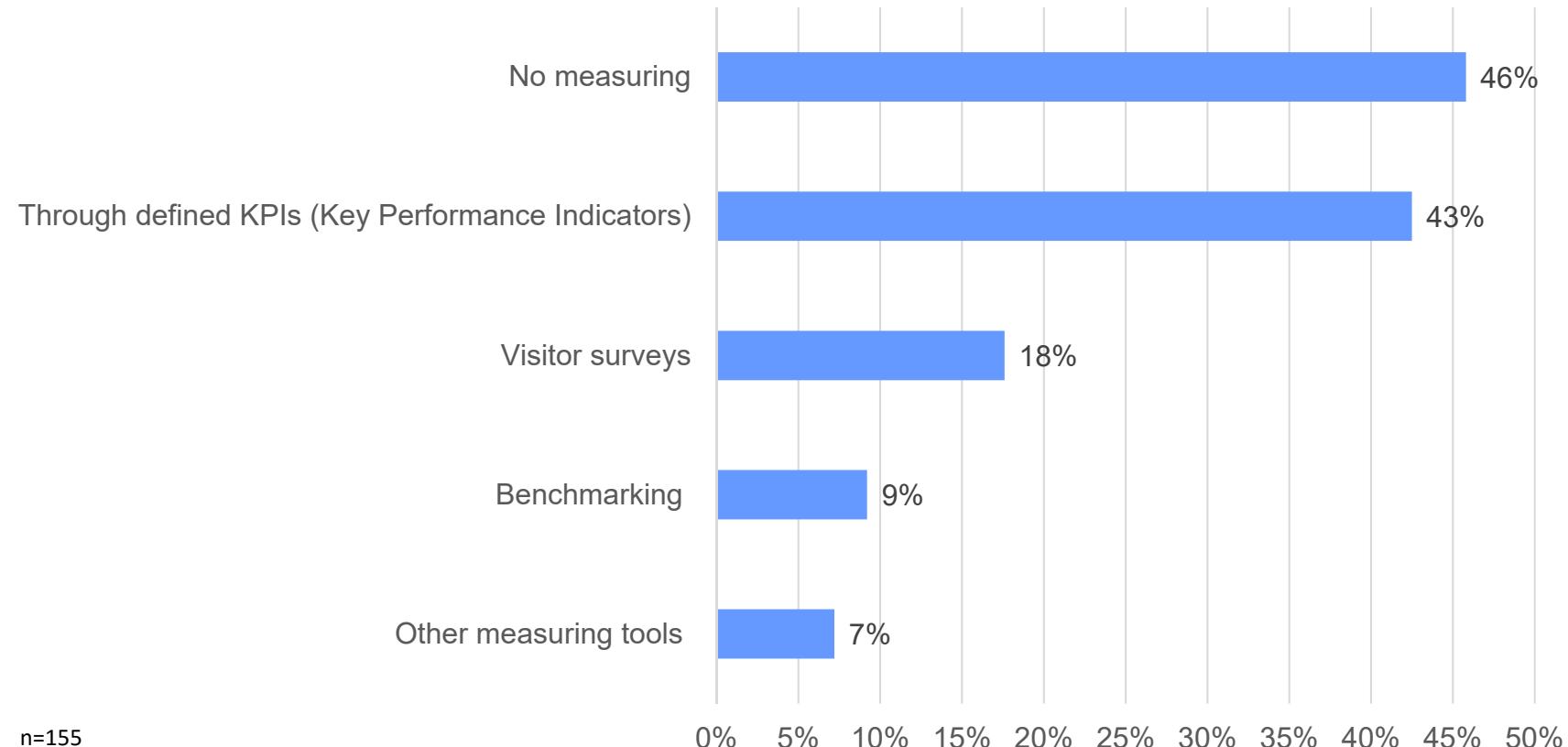
86% of the museums perceived the **lack of resources** to be a challenge or difficulty. The second biggest challenge is the **lack of competence/know-how**, followed by the difficulties caused by the **loss of control** over contents and images.

Planning of social media activities by museums



Almost half of the museums have indicated that their social media strategy is part of the marketing and communication strategy. However, it should be noted that **more than one-third of museums responded that they do not plan their social media activities strategically**, or that the use of social media is more experimental.

Measuring of social media activities by museums



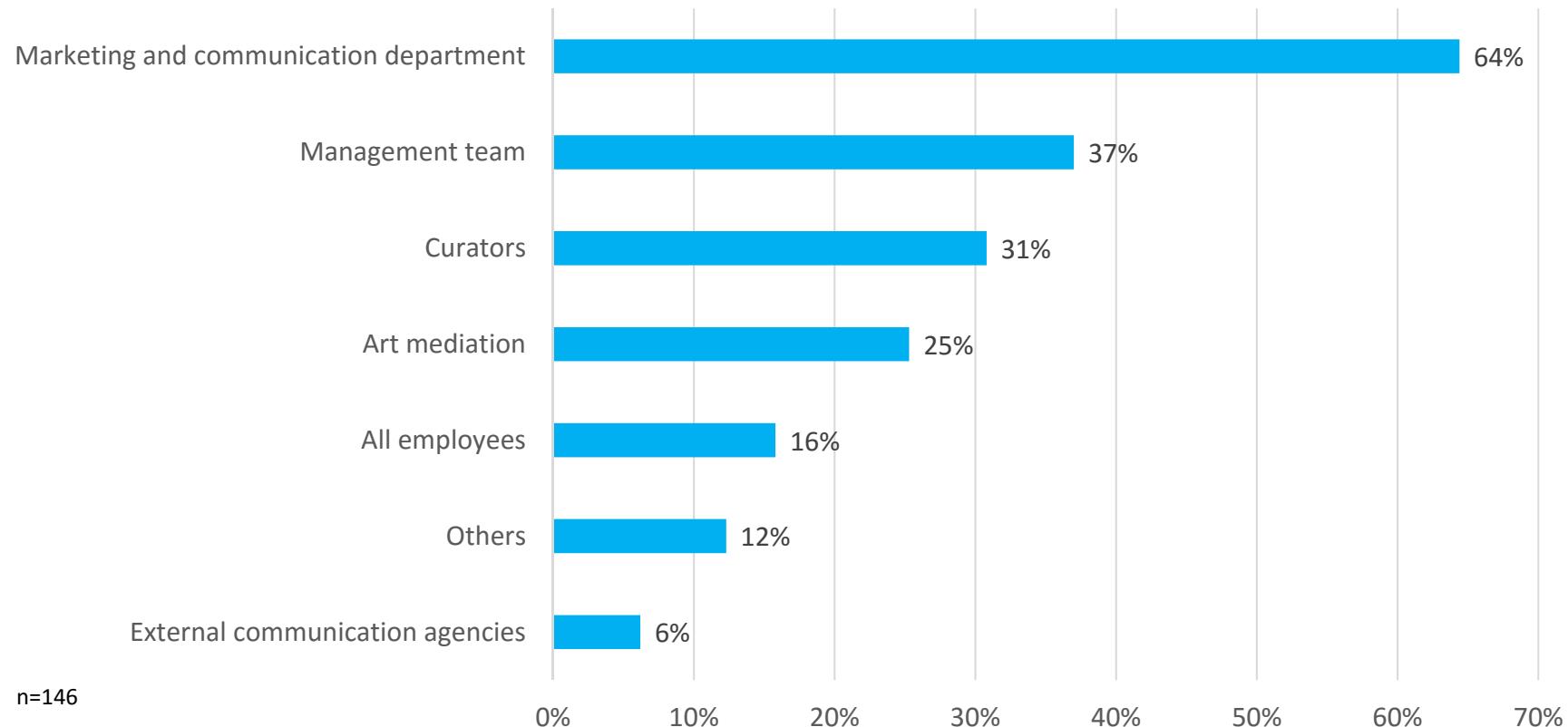
Almost half of the museums have answered not measuring the performance of their social media activities. However, 43% indicated to monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as measuring tools.

Number of full-time positions per department

	Mean	Min	Max	n
Overall institution	25.68	0	430	132
Marketing and Communication	2.22	0	75	138
Online and digital marketing	0.25	0	5	135
Social media	0.27	0	2	135

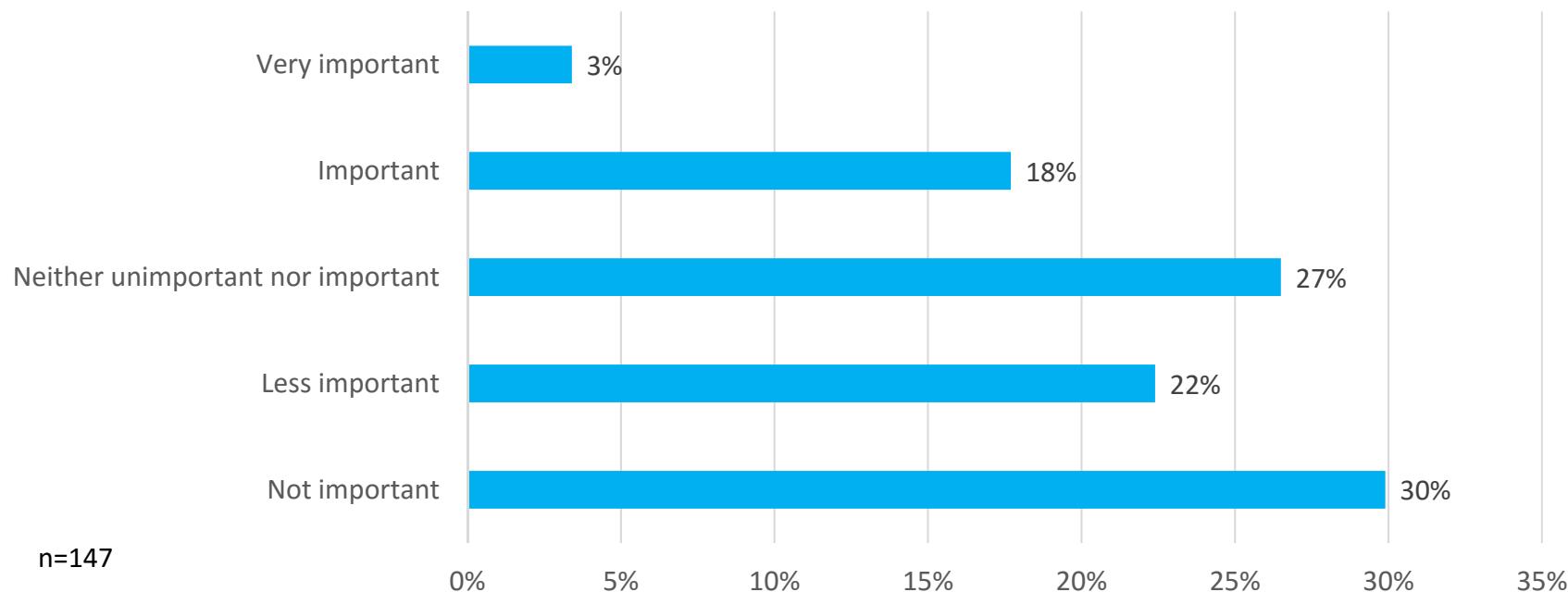
With regard to the allocation of museum staff, the above table gives an overview of the number of full-time positions by department. In general, the **proportion of full-time positions allocated to museum marketing or communication departments appears to be relatively low.**

Staff participating in museum social media activities



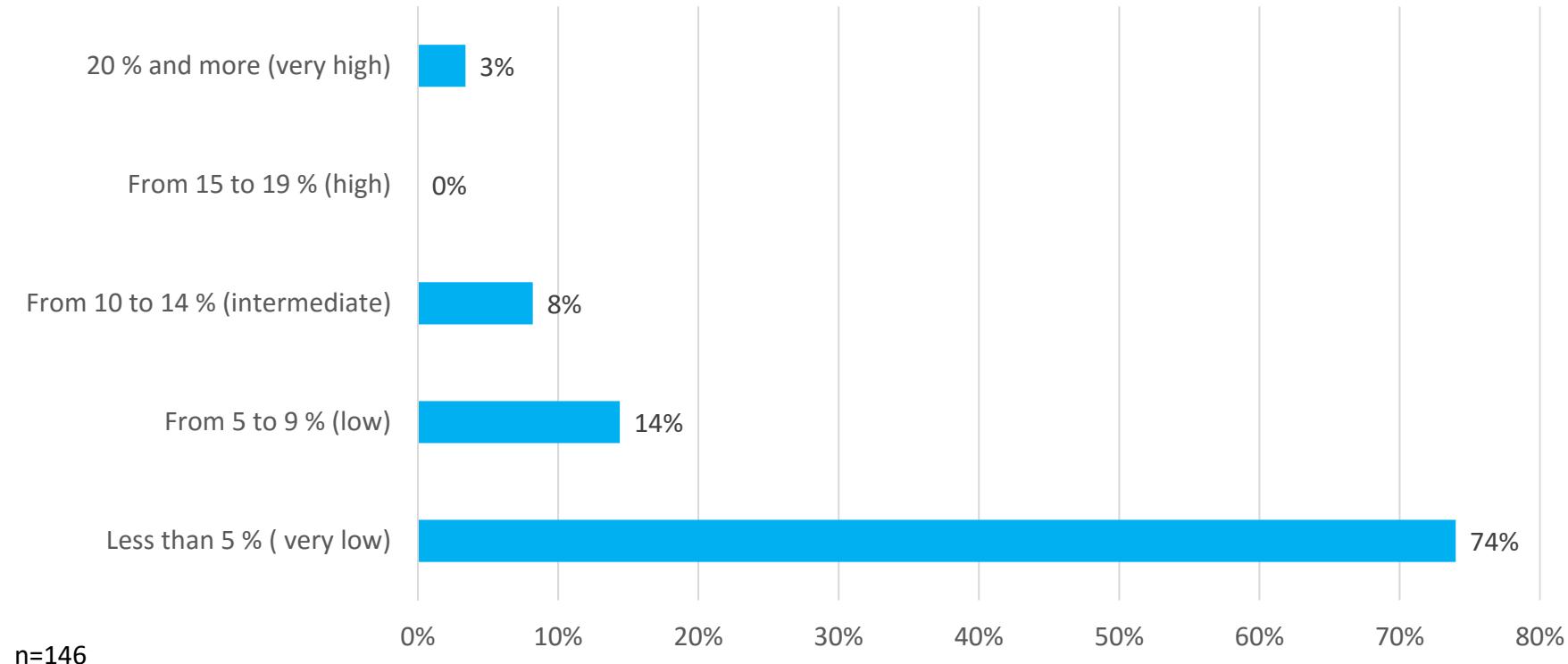
For the majority of museums (64%), the marketing and communications department is primarily involved in social media activities, followed by the management team (37%) and curators at third place (31%).

Importance of collaboration with external media representatives (e.g. bloggers, instagramers, influencers, etc.)



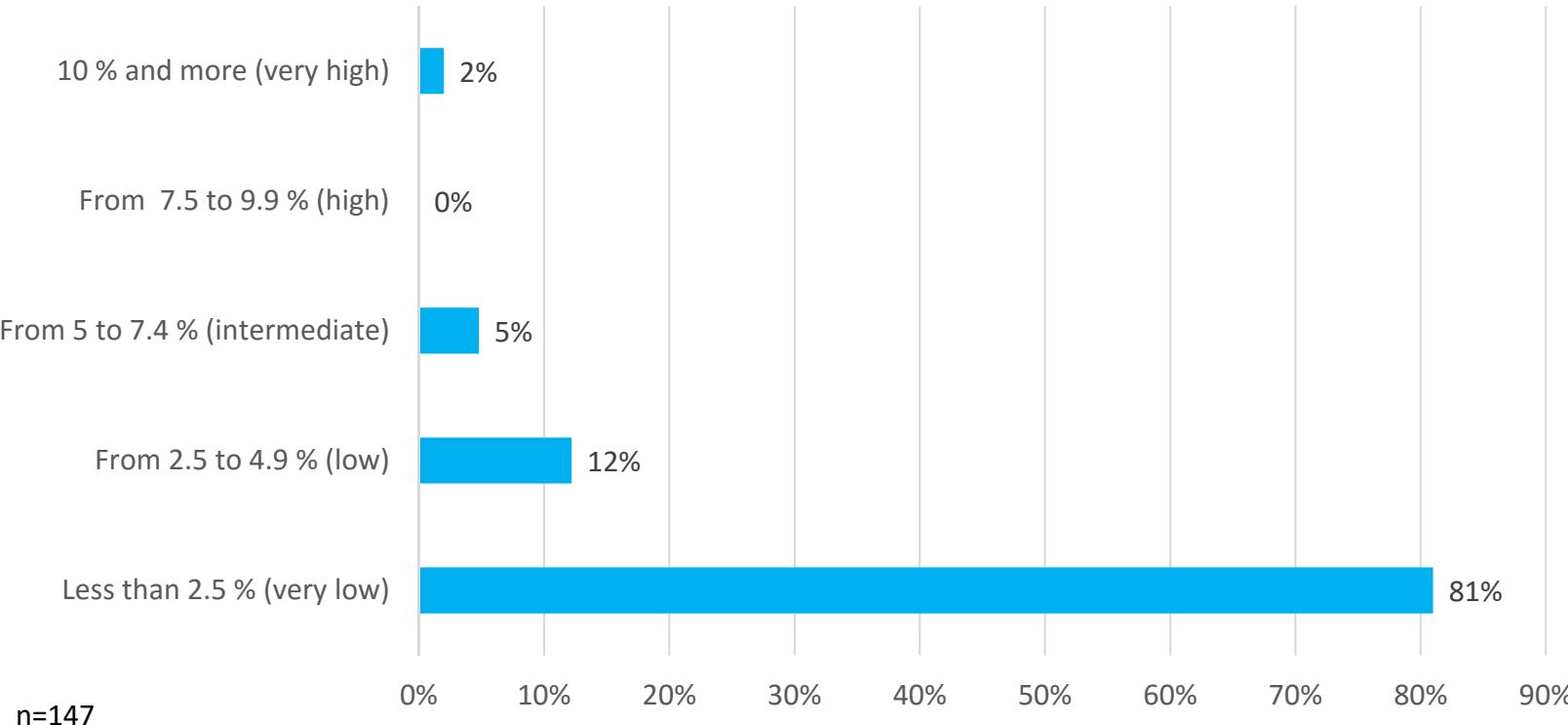
The results reveal a **relatively low importance of working with external media representatives** such as bloggers, instagramers, opinion leaders/influencers or independent authors with respect to museum social media activities.

Online marketing budget (share of the total marketing budget in %)



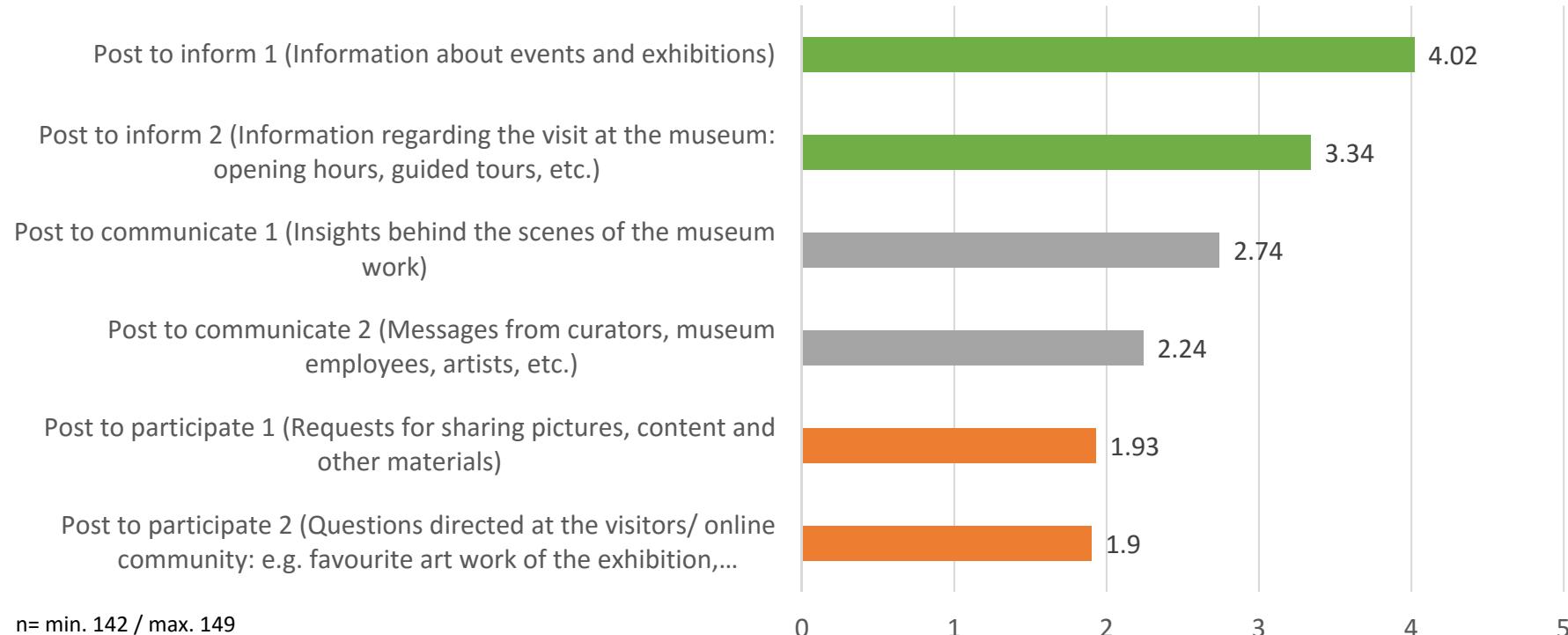
The museums' answers indicate a rather **small online marketing budget** allocation: almost three quarters of the museums allocate less than 5% of their total marketing budget to online marketing.

Social media budget (share of the total marketing budget in %)



Also as far as the social media budget is concerned, the museums' budget allocation seems to be rather low: more than **80% of the museums spend less than 2.5% of their total marketing budget on social media**.

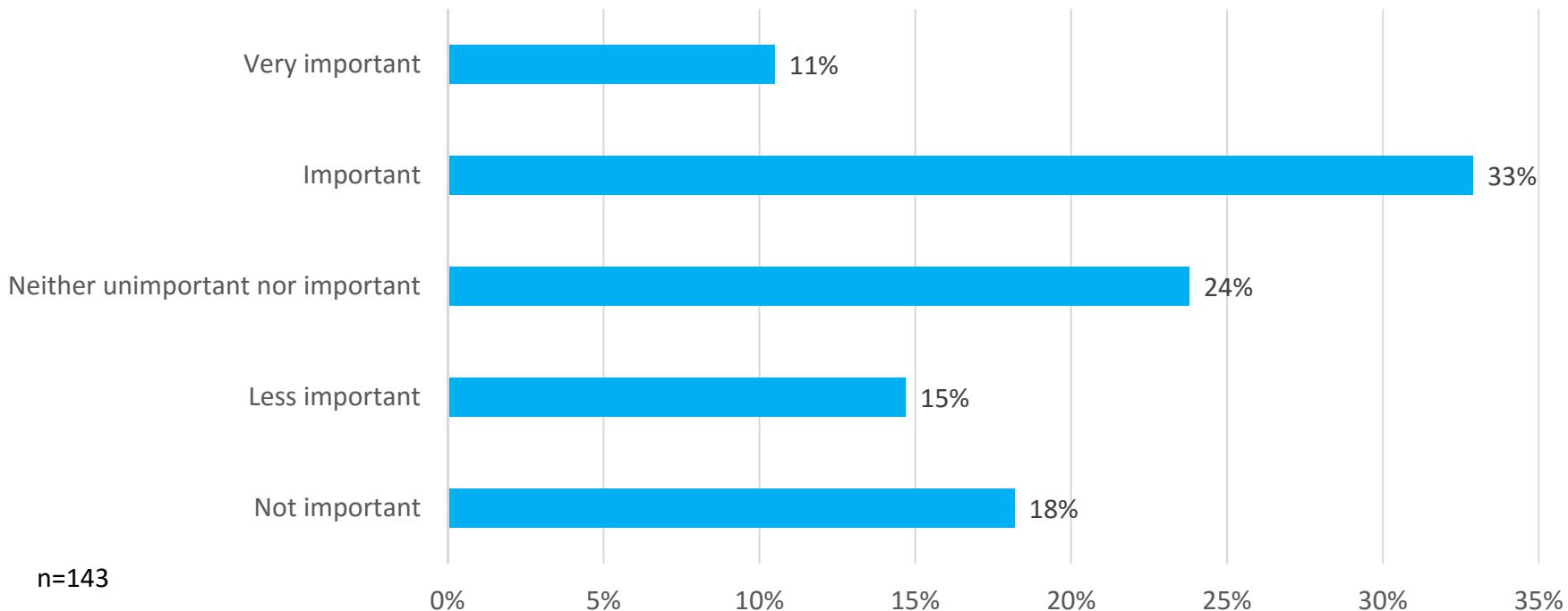
Social media content strategy



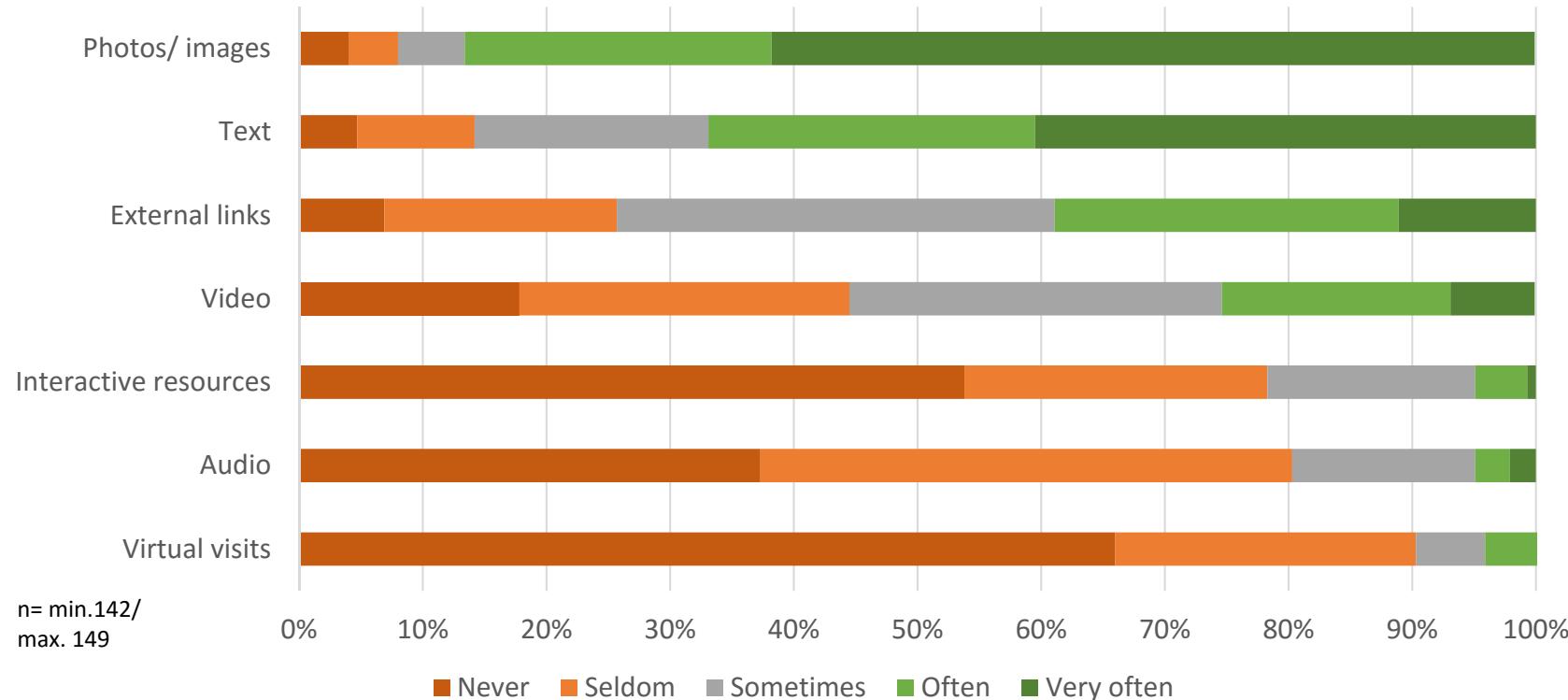
The graph above illustrates how often museums post content regarding the three different dimensions of application of social media (**to inform**, **to communicate** and **to participate**) according to Vogelsang et al. *. Every dimension was covered by two questions and museums had to indicate the frequency of use on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). It can be clearly seen that the museums more often post informative content (mean=4.02 and 3.34) as opposed to participative content (mean=1.93 and 1.90).

* Vogelsang, A., Minder, B., & Moor, S. (2011). *Social Media für Museen: Ein Leitfaden zum Einstieg in die Nutzung von Blog, Facebook, Twitter & Co. für die Museumsarbeit*. Luzern: Hochschule Luzern - Design & Kunst

Importance of storytelling as a rhetorical device for social media content

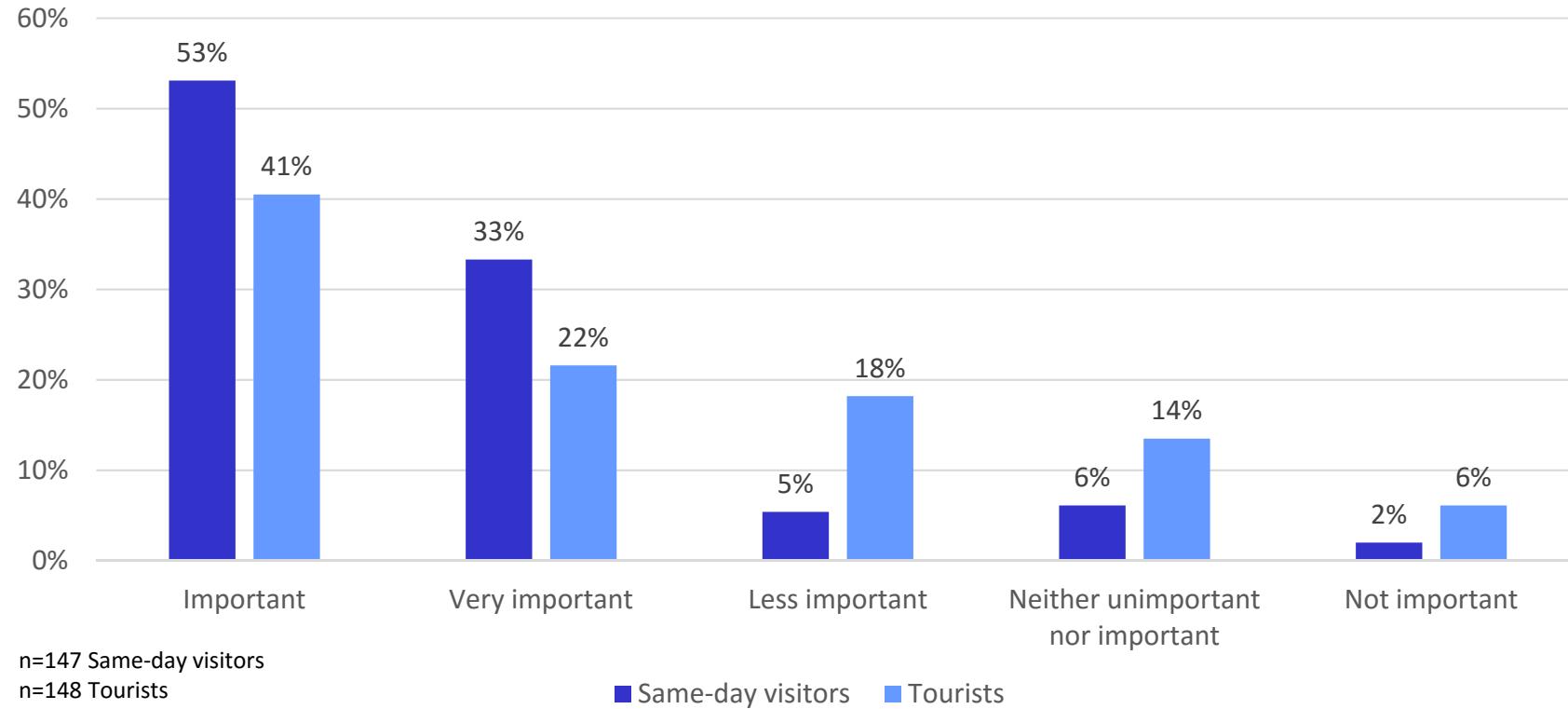


Use of different formats to present information on social media



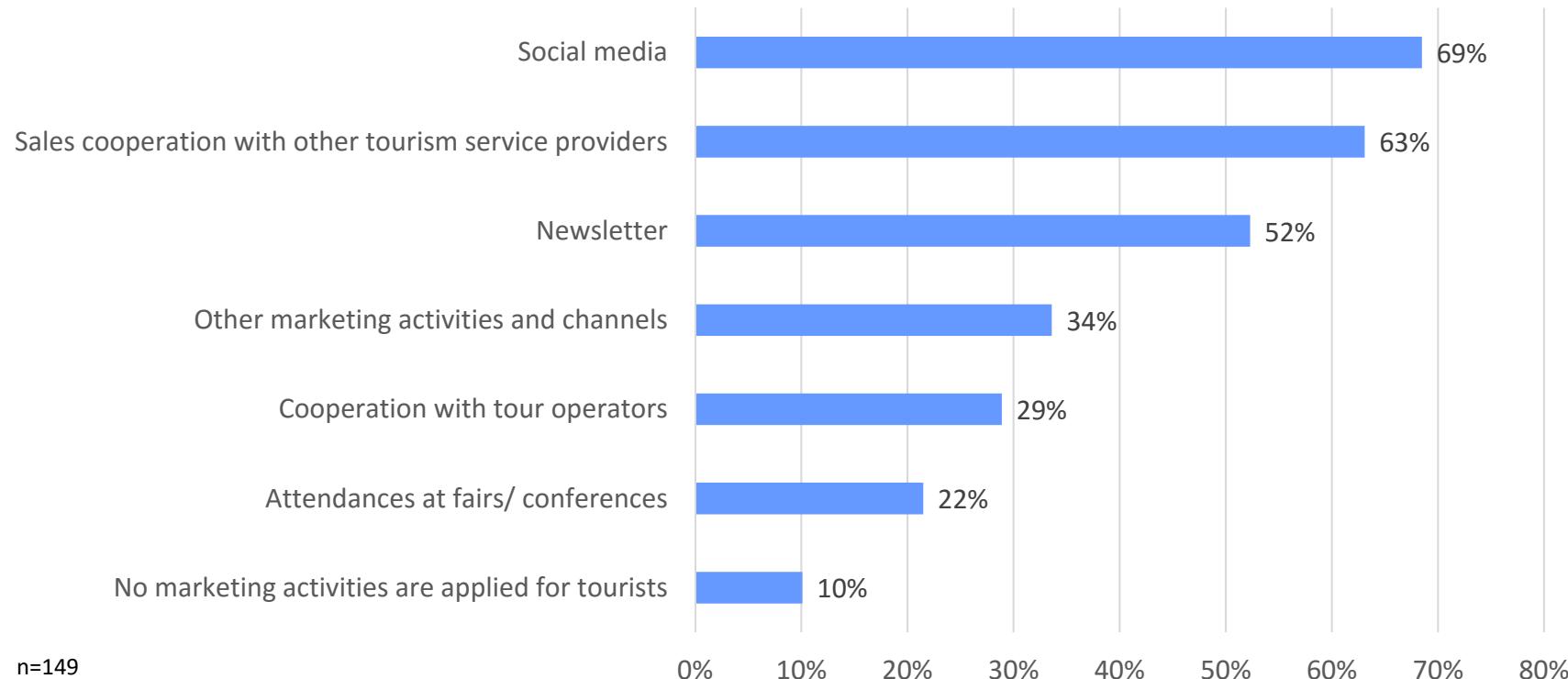
Museums favour clearly **images/ pictures** and **text**, followed by external links and videos.

Importance of same-day visitors and tourists for museums



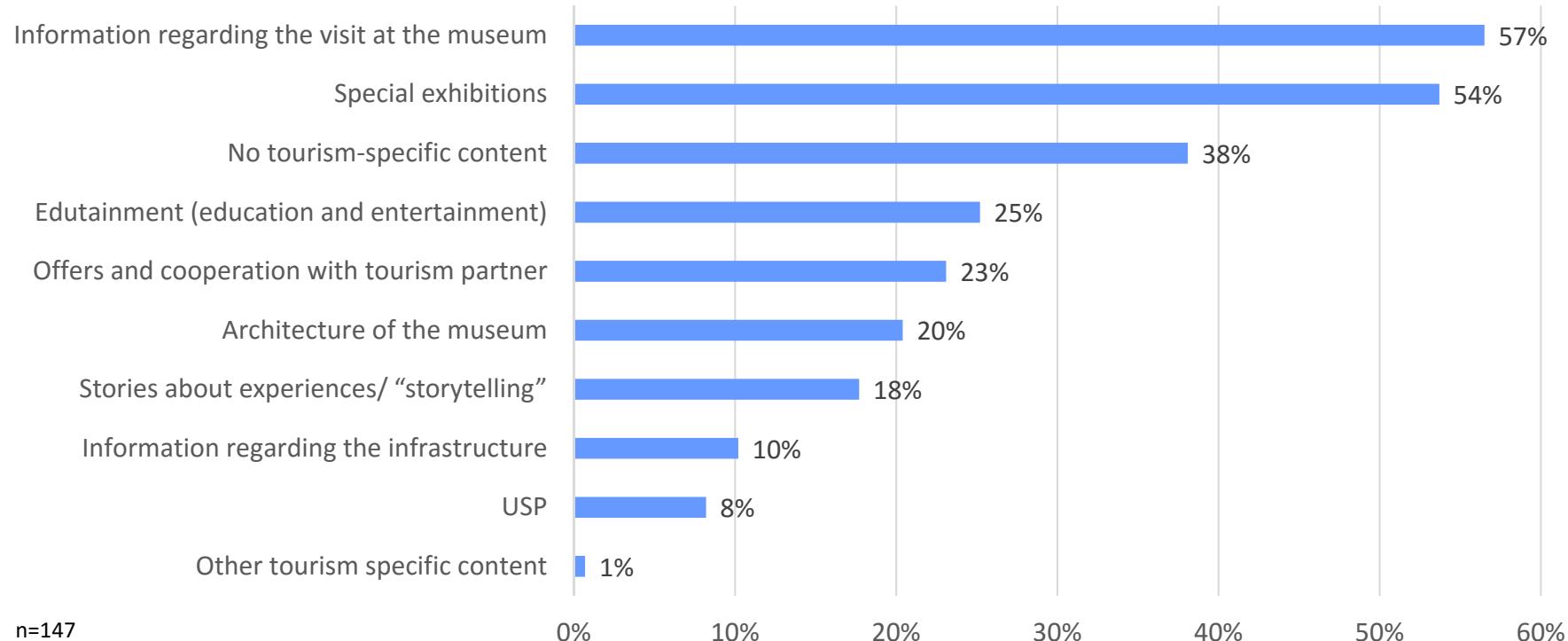
The museums' answers highlight the importance of tourism for museums. More than 85% and 60% of the museums responded that same-day visitors and tourists, respectively, are important to very important for their institution.

Channels and marketing activities applied by museums when targeting tourists



The results reveal the importance of **social media as a channel/ marketing activity for museums when targeting tourists**. Sales cooperation with other tourism service providers and newsletters follow in second and third place.

Content/ topics covered by museums on social media when addressing specifically to tourist visitors



Around 57% of the museums answered that they provide information about the visit at the museum when addressing tourist visitors through social media. Slightly fewer museums (54%) stated to post content on special exhibitions when addressing tourist visitors specifically. However, almost 40% of the museums indicated that they don't publish specific content for tourist visitors.

Contact (1)



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Annex: The questionnaire (1)

Use of social media

What goals are you pursuing with your social media strategy / your social media activities?
(multiple selection possible)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement (increasing of interactions / dialogues / the participation with museum visitors and the online community) | <input type="checkbox"/> To gain customer insight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conversion (e.g. transformation of online users into real visitors) | <input type="checkbox"/> Usage as a service or feedback channel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reach and awareness (e.g. promotion of an exhibition, reaching of a new target group, raising the brand profile) | <input type="checkbox"/> Art mediation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital extension to the offline museum space (e.g. insights into the archive / currently not displayed works) | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase of knowledge leadership / reputation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Generation of web-site traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> Other goals / objectives |

If "other goals / objectives", which ones?

How intensive do you use the following social media platforms?

	Not at all	Low (monthly)	Intermediate (once a week)	Intensive (several times a week)	Very intensive (daily)
Blog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Google+	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pinterest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reddit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snapchat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TripAdvisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Virtual reality platforms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wikipedia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you use other social media platforms, please state which ones:

Annex: The questionnaire (2)

Which of the following challenges / difficulties do you observe regarding the use of social media by museums?

- Possible damage of reputation
- Lack of resources
- Losing control over content and pictures (e.g. copyright issues)
- Lack of competence / know-how
- Organisational hierarchies and structures
- Other challenges / difficulties
- Dependencies on higher level institutions (e.g. authorities, city councils, etc.)

If "other challenges / difficulties", which ones?

How do you plan your social media activities?

- The social media strategy is part of the overall strategy of the institution
- Social media activities are treated as application processes, stipulated by means of a social media policy
- The social media strategy is part of the marketing and communication strategy
- The application of social media takes place rather experimentally
- The social media strategy is independent and defined separately
- No strategic planning of the social media activities

How do you measure the performance of your social media activities? (Multiple selection possible)

- Through defined KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)
- No measuring
- Benchmarking
- Other measuring tools
- Visitor surveys

If "other measuring tools", what are those?

Annex: The questionnaire (3)

Personnel

How many full-time positions do the following departments account for?

Overall institution

Marketing and communication

Online and digital marketing

Social media

Who is involved in your social media activities? (Multiple selection possible)

All employees

Art mediation

Management team

External communication agencies

Marketing and communication department

Others

Curators

Who if "others"?

How important is the collaboration with external media representatives for your social media activities? (e.g. bloggers, instagramers, influencers / opinion leaders, freelance authors, etc.)

Not important

Less important

Neither unimportant
nor important

Important

Very important

Budget

How much budget do you allocate for social media (approximate percentage to overall marketing budget)?

Less than 2.5 % (very low)

From 2.5 to 4.9 % (low)

From 5 to 7.4 % (intermediate)

From 7.5 to 9.9 % (high)

10 % and more (very high)

Annex: The questionnaire (4)

How much budget do you allocate for online marketing (approximate percentage to overall marketing budget)?

Less than 5 % (very low)	From 5 to 9 % (low)	From 10 to 14 % (intermediate)	From 15 to 19 % (high)	20 % and more (very high)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social media content

How often do you post social media contributions with the following content?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Information about events and exhibitions	<input type="radio"/>				
Messages from curators, museum employees, artists, etc.	<input type="radio"/>				
Questions directed at the visitors/ online community (e.g. favourite art work of the exhibition, impressions, feedback)	<input type="radio"/>				
Information regarding the visit at the museum (opening hours, guided tours, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Insights behind the scenes of the museum work	<input type="radio"/>				
Requests for sharing pictures, content and other materials	<input type="radio"/>				

How important is storytelling as a rhetorical device for editing social media content?

Not important	Less important	Neither unimportant nor important	Important	Very important
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Annex: The questionnaire (5)

How often do you use the following tools to present information on social media?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Text	<input type="radio"/>				
Photos/ images	<input type="radio"/>				
Audio	<input type="radio"/>				
Video	<input type="radio"/>				
External links	<input type="radio"/>				
Interactive resources	<input type="radio"/>				
Virtual visits	<input type="radio"/>				

Tourism context

How important are tourists (visitors whose trips include an overnight stay) for your institution?

Not important	<input type="radio"/>	Less important	<input type="radio"/>	Neither unimportant nor important	<input type="radio"/>	Important	<input type="radio"/>	Very important	<input type="radio"/>
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How important are same-day visitors (non-local visitors whose trips do not include an overnight stay, e.g. from another canton) for your institution?

Not important	<input type="radio"/>	Less important	<input type="radio"/>	Neither unimportant nor important	<input type="radio"/>	Important	<input type="radio"/>	Very important	<input type="radio"/>
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Annex: The questionnaire (6)

Which channels and marketing activities do you apply when targeting tourists?

- No marketing activities are applied for tourists
- Sales cooperation with other tourism service providers
- Newsletter
- Social media
- Attendances at fairs/ conferences
- Other marketing activities and channels
- Cooperation with tour operators

If "other marketing activities and channels", which ones?

In which languages do you communicate on social media? (Multiple selection possible)

- German
- Spanish
- French
- Dutch
- Italian
- Other languages
- English

If "other languages", which ones?

What content/ which topics do you cover on social media when addressing specifically to tourist visitors?

- No tourism-specific content
- Information regarding the infrastructure
- Special exhibitions
- Edutainment (education and entertainment)
- Architecture of the museum
- Offers and cooperation with tourism partner
- Information regarding the visit at the museum (opening hours, languages, ticket information etc.)
- Stories about experiences/ "storytelling"
- USP
- Other tourism specific content

If "other tourism specific content", which ones?

Annex: The questionnaire (7)

General information

Name of the museum/ institution

Country

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Belgium | <input type="radio"/> Switzerland |
| <input type="radio"/> Germany | <input type="radio"/> Spain |
| <input type="radio"/> France | <input type="radio"/> USA |
| <input type="radio"/> Italy | <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom |

Size of the museum/ institution

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Up to 50'000 attendances per year | <input type="radio"/> 500.001 to 1.000.000 attendances per year |
| <input type="radio"/> 50'001 to 100'000 attendances per year | <input type="radio"/> 1.000.001 and more attendances per year |
| <input type="radio"/> 100.001 to 500.000 attendances per year | |

Museum category (choose the most appropriate one)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Art museum | <input type="radio"/> Technical museum |
| <input type="radio"/> Archaeological museum | <input type="radio"/> Museum with a specific theme |
| <input type="radio"/> History museum | <input type="radio"/> Museum of ethnology and ethnography |
| <input type="radio"/> Natural history museum | <input type="radio"/> Other category |
| <input type="radio"/> Regional and local museum | |

If "other category", which one?

Is your museum/ institution member of the association Art Museums of Switzerland?

- Yes, member AMOS No

If you would like to receive the results of this survey, please type your email address

Email address