

CASE STUDY: Museum of Art of São Paulo

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MASP – Museum of Art of São Paulo



Retrieved from: MASP – <https://masp.org.br/en/>

The institution chosen for this assignment is considered one of the main sights of São Paulo, Brazil. Besides MASP being known for its incredible architecture, the focus of this museum is on public space and public art, offering exhibitions, events and courses to the public. The museum was chosen because of its social media strategy and content created during the pandemic. In this paper the Museums communication strategy during the pandemic is analysed to show points of improvement and the strategies used by the museum that could be a benchmark to other public organizations around the world, specially related to their success with Instagram content.

Public

According to the website and material from the museum, it provides a culturally diverse museum. Focusing on opening space to multiple different “histories”; as seen in the quote below:

Throughout each year there is a broad programming of group exhibitions and solo shows articulated around thematic axes: histories of sexuality (2017), Afro-Atlantic histories (2018),

histories of feminism/women (2019). It is important to consider the plural quality of the term “histories,” pointing to multiple, diverse and polyphonic histories, open, inconstant and unfinished histories, fragmented and layered histories, nontotalizing and nondefinitive histories (MASP - <https://masp.org.br/en/about>).

The museum shows the same approach when defining its mission (Good to note that it was changed in 2017, but the old one wasn't available). The mission focus on inclusivity and diversity:

MASP, a diverse, inclusive and plural museum, has the mission to establish, in a critical and creative way, dialogues between past and present, cultures and territories, through the visual arts. To this end, it should enlarge, conserve, research and disseminate its collection, while also promoting the encounter between its various publics and art through transformative and welcoming experiences (MASP - <https://masp.org.br/en/about>).

MASP focus on offering all of that with a mix of Brazilian/Latin America, and worldwide artists, and does that by leveraging more than eleven thousand pieces in the museum's archives.

Audience

This is a national museum located in the region of São Paulo, Brazil. Since the city is very multicultural and receives many international visitors during the year, it also targets the international public with MASPs exhibitions, but not necessarily with the online activities or social media. The only platform that is also in English is MASPs website, but the rest of the communication with the public is entirely in Brazilian Portuguese. All the exhibitions are accessible and have English translation, but courses as well as other activities that the museum offers are only in Portuguese, which ends up excluding international people visiting the museum. Those activities and audience choices have not changed during the pandemic.

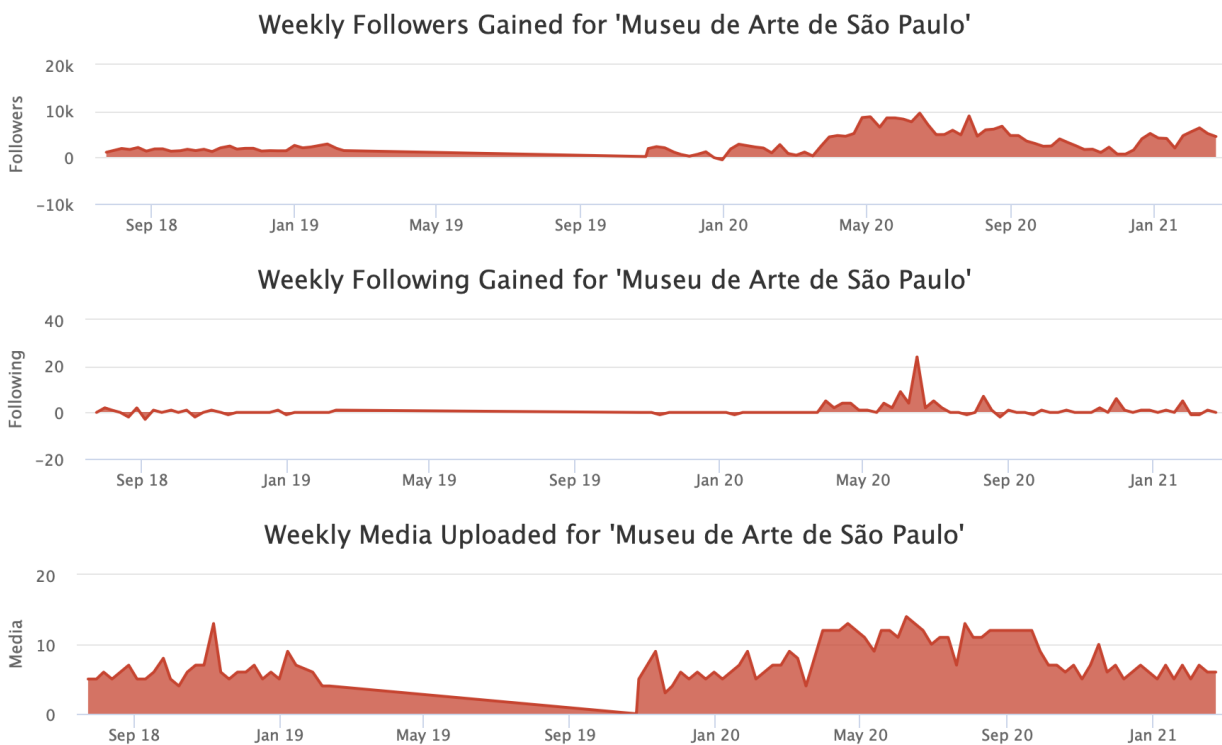
Social Media

This organization is very prominent in social media and has been using them in the pandemic as a way to keep the public engaged. With the situation in Brazil being uncertain – lock down on-and-off – the museum seems to continue to work strongly in social media to guarantee that the public continues engaged. Here are some examples of what has been done by the museum online that could be considered as benchmark for other public culture organizations.

Instagram (@masp)

The museum account on Instagram is verified and has more than 684 000 followers. It is the platform mostly used by the museum to engage the public and it has been showing results. Using a marketing analysis tool (Social Blade), it is possible to see the increase of content posted being corelated with the increase in followers on the platform. Important to note as well how much the content posted increased starting in January 2020, hitting its peak during the months that the city of São Paulo had a lockdown.

GAINED FOLLOWERS, FOLLOWING, & MEDIA GRAPHS FOR MASP

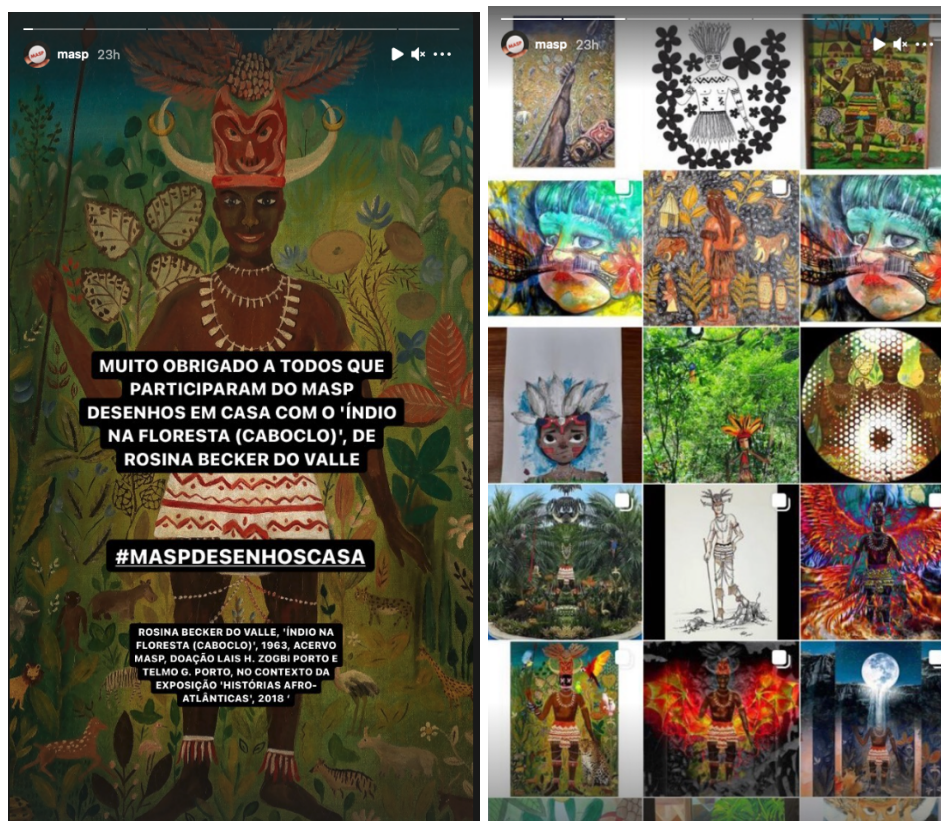


<https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/masp/monthly>

One of the activities on Instagram that has gained a lot of attention and engagement is a monthly challenge that the museum has prepared as follows: Depending on the exhibition in place, the museum launches a challenge where it posts images of one of the pieces and asks its followers to participate by sharing their own drawings that were inspired by such artwork; the winner gets a free monthly pass to the museum. The museum interacted on the posts, commenting and sharing the images on its other platforms as well. That activity has generated hundreds of responses of elaborated work:

Left Image: Image the museum shared

Right Image: The posts made by the public



(Images retrieved from – Instagram Stories <https://www.instagram.com/masp/>)

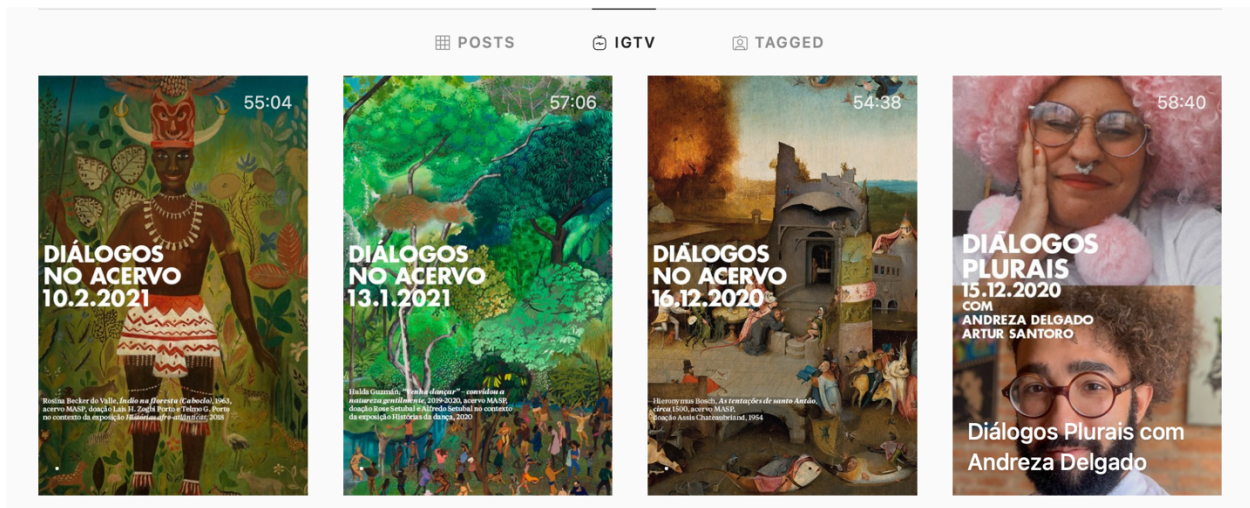
Other activities that the museum has been creating to engage with the public on Instagram include: adding images and explanations of its pieces that are in the collection as well as sharing new acquisitions by the museum. Specific examples follow:

1) Telling the story of each item and how it got into the collection:



(Image retrieved from @masp – <https://www.instagram.com/p/CL9Y-QPJTrj/>)

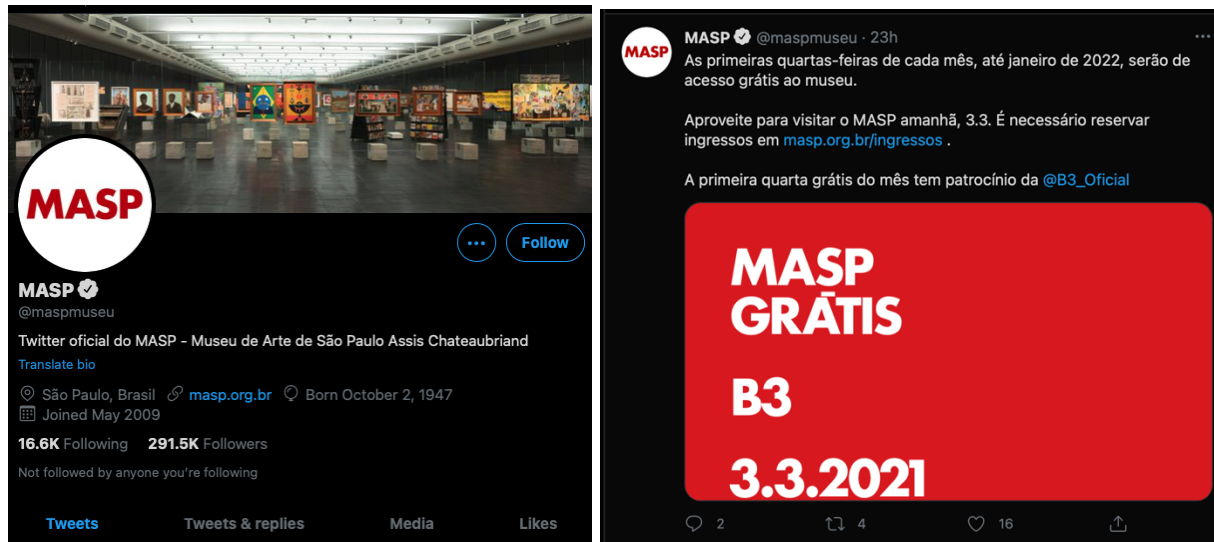
2) Creating a video series called Archive talks, where curators come and talk about different aspects of exhibitions and pieces, as well as the importance of each one for the museum:



(Images retrieved from @masp – Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/masp/channel/>)

Twitter

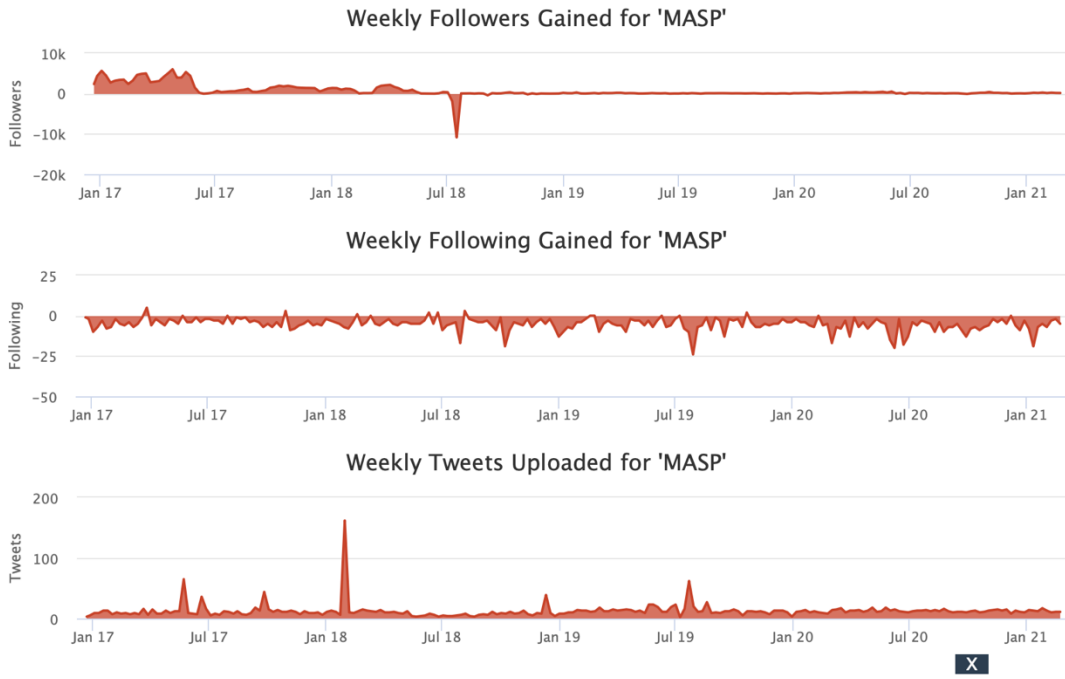
MASP has more than 291.000 followers on Twitter and created its account in 2009. The museum uses Twitter as a form to replicate the content created on Instagram, as well as to redirect the public to MASP website, answer questions and post about the museum hours.



(Retrieved from - @maspmuseu Twitter <http://twitter.com/maspmuseu>)

MASP strategy on Twitter is different from on Instagram and does not seem to be as effective, as the following graphs show (retrieved from Social Blade platform). There was neither an increase in posting nor in followers since the start of the pandemic:

GAINED FOLLOWERS, FOLLOWING, & TWEETS GRAPHS FOR MASPMUSEU



(<https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/maspmuseu>)

Facebook

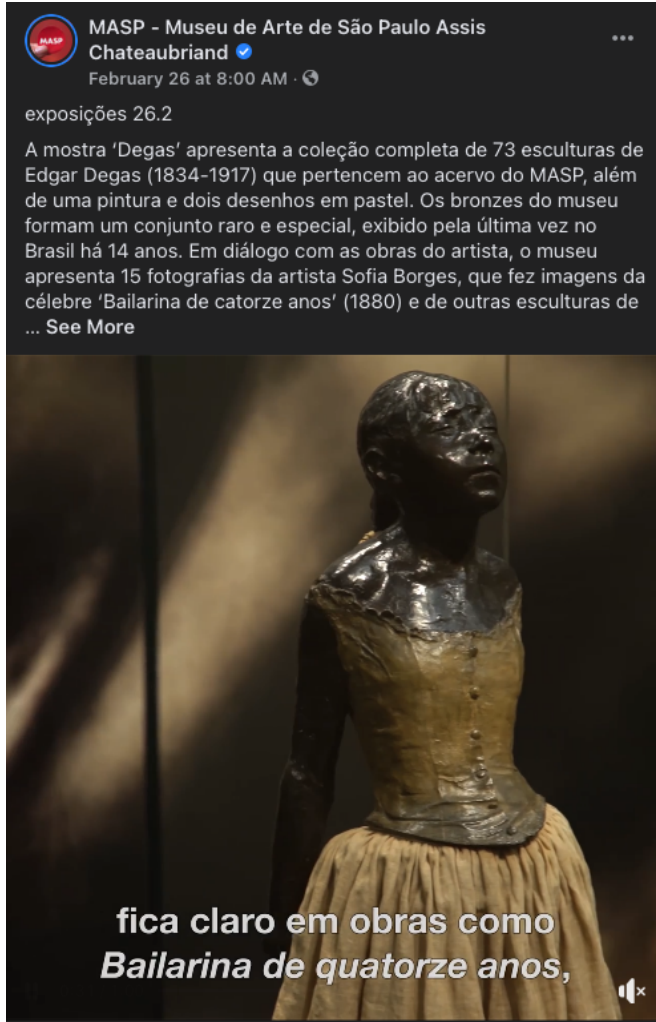
The museum has more than 265.000 followers on Facebook. It seems to have taken a new approach lately, to recycle some of the same content posted on Instagram (but in different order):



(Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/maspmuseu>) –

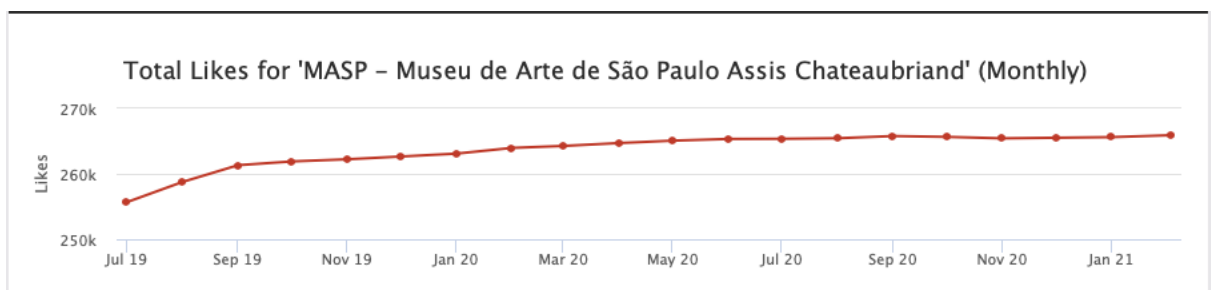
This content, for example, was posted on Instagram a month before it appeared on the Facebook page.

Other content was brought in new formats in order to fit the Facebook medium better, for example short videos of the exhibitions:



(Retrieved from: @maspmuseu – Facebook <https://fb.watch/42qQbg0gpm/>)

The number of likes on the Facebook page has been increasing, equally with the increase of content by the museum. The following and engagement have demonstrated a steady but low growth on Facebook, especially when compared to MASP Instagram results:



(Retrieved from - <https://socialblade.com/facebook/page/maspmuseu/monthly>)

Other activities

Considering MASPs website, the museum has a channel called “MASP SCHOOL”, where they offer courses for the general public as well as specialized courses for professionals in the field. Those courses seem to fill up fast and have an accessible cost and have been transferred to online during the pandemic, which not only increased the number of people who can participate, but also allowed people from other locations to take it.

FEMINISMOS EM TRÂNSITO: NARRATIVAS E ESTÉTICAS NA ARTE LATINO-AMERICANA

HORÁRIO
18H30-20H30

PROFESSORES
ANELISE VALLS

DURAÇÃO DO MÓDULO
ONLINE
1, 2, 3, 4 E 5.3.2021
SEGUNDA, TERÇA, QUARTA, QUINTA
E SEXTA
(5 AULAS)

INVESTIMENTO
PÚBLICO GERAL
5X R\$ 48,00
AMIGO MASP
5X R\$ 40,80
*VALORES PARCELADOS NO CARTÃO
DE CRÉDITO

(Retrieved from: <https://masp.org.br/masp-escola>)

Content Strategy

The content posted by the museum is mostly asynchronous, with the exception of the online courses that have synchronous online sessions. The activities with the public have a two-way interaction most of the time, with the museum asking questions and opinions on MASP posts to increase engagement, as well as the use of online drawing challenges.

The focus of the content appears to be to the same public that they were attending to before the pandemic. That said, MASPs courses created the possibility of serving a larger part of the community as they are now online.

As for the content chosen, MASP courses and exhibitions always bring an element of dialogue. One example is the course “Feminism: The narratives and esthetic in Latin America,”. It focuses on showing the differences between the feminist movement in Latin American portrayed in the art movement. The choice of exhibits speaks to not only modern art but has elements of other cultures, creating through discussing the meaning of each piece, for example: <https://masp.org.br/exposicoes/erika-verzutti>.

The main focus of the creation of online content was dedicated to Instagram and then shared through Facebook and Twitter. For Instagram, the content was very focused on the images of different art pieces and its story, which definitely worked well with the medium and created engagement. As for Twitter and Facebook, it does not seem to have generated the same effect, while posts more focused on the medium, like the video for Facebook, were more popular than just the copies of Instagram posts. That seems to be a strategy to focus the content creation in one medium, but creating exclusive content for Twitter and Facebook can have more effect in MASPs transmedia story telling as well as the public engagement.

Benchmarks and best practices

First of all, this example shows that the increase of quality content over the platforms, and content dedicated to one appropriate social media platform (Instagram for example, was the focus choice for this museum) generate more engagement and visibility. Considering the activities and content created by MASP, three of them can be considered very successful:

- The monthly drawing challenges: with hundreds of answers to the challenges, these engaged the attention of the public for the exhibits as well as giving them an opportunity to interact with the museum. There were a lot of great responses and elaborated drawings (as seen on the screenshots shown above).
- Archive posts – The archive series, on IGTV as well as feed posts, seem to attract a lot of attention from the public, as those are pieces that are not readily available for the public to see, or that haven’t been exhibited for a long time, that also created engagement (considering likes and comments) on the platforms. An example would be: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CL9Y-QPJTj/>

- Online MASP School: The increase in courses as well as the change to a full online program increased the access for people who do not live in São Paulo, as well as increasing the number of people who can participate in each course. The school seems to be very popular with the public (though, there is no evidence available to confirm it).

Possible next steps

There are other opportunities that the museum has not explored, such as establishing a presence on other platforms. One platform that keeps growing in engagement is TikTok, which could be considered as a way to engage with the public and show the different content and exhibits that the museum has to offer. One museum that has used this strategically is the Museum of Senses Bucuresti (located in Romania). Since starting an account during the pandemic, this museum has acquired more than 32k followers, as well as more than 864k likes on MASPs posts (<https://www.tiktok.com/@museumofsensesbucuresti?lang=en>).

Charr (2020), when talking about TikTok strategies for museums, emphasizes the need for creativity instead of copying of what other institutions are already doing. The platform is one which thrives on originality, so the strategy has to be well thought out.

Conclusion

The MASP has used its social media platforms to engage with the public as well as bringing new content about exhibits or collections. It has successfully demonstrated transmedia storytelling when engaging the public in the story behind pieces, its meanings and also in displaying new acquisitions. This response has created great engagement with the public, as well as having helped the museum see an increase in the number of visits between the lockdowns in the city of São Paulo. It seems that the content strategy and development has created positive results for the museum, and that has the potential to continue engaging the public post-pandemic (Freire, 2020).

References

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